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Divine Deviants: the Dialectics of Devotion in the Poetry of Donne and Rūmi

by

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Abstract

The central focus of my dissertation is a comparative study of the Persian Sufi poet, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi and the English Metaphysical poet, John Donne. In my study, I have analyzed the two schools of thought to which these poets belong as well as their individual poetic worldviews and styles in order to elucidate the different dimensions of the shared philosophy governing their poetry. Mine is, in itself, a Metaphysical endeavor, namely to use Dr. Johnson's phrase facetiously, "yoking together" two literary masters who are culturally, chronologically, and geographically so distant.

Both Rūmi and Donne, in the first place, were lovers and seekers of Truth. Rūmi belongs to the Islamic tradition of mysticism in which the mystic devotes himself to his main purpose of direct contact and unity with God. Interestingly enough, on the other hand, John Donne's poetry reveals his concern primarily with God and his relation to God. The prevailing tone of religious quest, in other words, constitutes the backbone of most of Donne's poetry, even in those poems when the overt mode of the poem is one of mockery. In other words, in their metaphysical pursuit both poets reveal the same philosophically religious tendency.

Conceptually moreover, I have demonstrated that in the poems of both poets love symbolizes Beatific Vision and Truth. Similarly in the hands of both we are able to see that poetry is not an end but a means.

My close and comparative study of these two poets has highlighted the basic principles that underlie the metaphysical poems of Rūmi and Donne, two poets who only *appear* to be so wide apart in culture, time, and space. Bridging linguistic, cultural, religious, and philosophical barriers, my work has opened up a new domain of scholarship in the discipline of comparative literature. In a yet more general area, my study highlights the bonds between the two disciplines of religion/mysticism and literature and thus examines not only the interdependent issues in the two disciplines but also the invisible and yet highly astonishing closeness that exists in the representative works of the two literary and religious traditions.

For Homayoun

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Introduction

To compare Rūmi and Donne, two poets so wide apart in culture, religion, and language is far from an easy task. Due to the uniqueness of poets, it would even be a challenge to draw a parallel between two poets who share the same culture and language. This task is doubly complicated in the case of Rūmi and Donne. Yet, in spite of the apparent gap that exists between these two poets, the similarity of both their poetic subjects and styles is so striking that it can hardly escape the notice of any reader possessing a fair amount of familiarity with their works. After all, man and his relation to God, to the universe, and to other human beings serve as the foundation of the literature of all peoples and cultures, and since human nature does not fundamentally vary, it should not be utterly surprising to find in Rūmi and Donne the same store of subjects and themes and more or less the same way of putting them into words.

The rationale of comparing Rūmi and Donne is primarily a typological one. Both were mystic poets who stood at the height of poetic expression in defining the nature of the relationship with the Divine. The two poets excel in both of the artistic and mystical paradigms through their peculiar and subtle poetic expressions and the highly individual way each selects to approach God.

Rūmi's powerful imagination, his extensive resort to a variety of images from different fields, the masterful employment of figures of speech, his eloquent language, and, finally, the numerous new rhythms he introduces into Persian poetry make his work unsurpassed among other poets in Persian classical poetry.

In this regard and by way of comparing the poet to Hafiz[1], R. A. Nicholson has written how

> Jalālu'ddīn [Rūmi] lacks the colour and perfume of Hāfiz, who is by turns grave and gay, blasphemous and devout, serious and ironic; his music is rich and full, but for the most part he plays on one string; he has no sense of humour; his allegory is often grotesque and his execution careless. (*Selected Poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz* xlvi)

Nicholson continues his praise of Rūmi by stating that

> In sublimity of thought and grandeur of expression he challenges the greatest masters of song; time after time he strikes a lofty note without effort; the clearness of his vision gives a wonderful exaltation to his verse, which beats against the sky; his odes throb with passion and rapture-enkindling power; his diction is choice and unartificial; at intervals we meet with some splendidly imaginative figure … . (*Selected Poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz* xlvi)

In a similar way, Donne is known as one of the masters of poetic expression in terms of his extraordinary command of language, his use of a

[1] Master of classical Persian *ghazal* (sonnet). Hafiz was born in 1320 in Shiraz and died in 1389.

variety of images of peculiar kinds, and his highly masterful exploitation of figurative devices—the Metaphysical conceit is only one of Donne's greatest artistic achievements and most subtle contributions to English poetry. Coleridge's famous descriptions of Donne's poetry best reveals the uniqueness of the poet's art: "Wonder-exciting vigour, intenseness and peculiarity of thought, using at will the almost boundless stores of a capacious memory, and exercised on subjects where we have no right to expect it—this is the wit of Donne!" (qtd in *John Donne: Poetry & Prose* xlviii) As seen in the above discussion, the innovative methods of expression powered by supreme imagination and the peculiar resort to images of various natures provide strong links between the two poets as will be referred to within different contexts in chapters two through five of this dissertation.

These two literary monarchs, moreover, are known for excelling other poets in their respective traditions, particularly with regards to their unique sense of humor. The various anecdotes throughout Rūmi's monumental work, *Masnavi*, highlight this essential characteristic of his work, which is not shared by any other Persian poet addressing the nature of the man-God relationship. "The story of druggist whose balance-weight was clay for washing the head; and how a customer, who was a clay-eater, stole some of that clay covertly and secretly, whilst sugar was being weighed" (Nicholson 1968) is only one of the numerous examples reflecting Rūmi's subtle sense of humor. Thus we read towards the middle of the poem about an analogy, as thought by the customer, between his

case and a certain man who had been given an option to marry a "confectioner's daughter":

> To himself he said, "What does the weight matter to one that
> Eats clay? Clay is better than gold."
> As the *dallála* (go-between) who said, "O son, I have found
> A very beautiful new bride (for you).
> (She is) exceedingly pretty, but there is just one thing, that the
> lady is a confectioner's daughter."
> "(All the) better," said he; "if it is indeed so, his daughter
> will be fatter and sweeter." (Nicholson 1968, 4: 629-32)

In a similar way, Donne's poetry can be said to be a network of intricate, witty, and humorous expressions, which as I have already mentioned, marks him as immediately distinct from other English poets. While profoundly characteristic of Donne's sensitive nature and meticulous mind, however, humor is quite often paralleled with sarcasm in his poetry, particularly if the subject of the poem is love intertwined with the infidelity of women:

> Send home my long-strayed eyes to me,
> Which oh too long have dwelt on thee;
> Yet since there they have learned such ill,
> Such forced fashions,
> And false passions,
> That they be
> Made by thee
> Fit for no good sight, keep them still.

Send home my harmless heart again,
Which no unworthy thought could stain;
But if it be taught by thine
To make jestings
Of protestings,
And cross both
Word and oath,
Keep it, for then 'tis none of mine. (The Message 1-16)

As I have briefly highlighted, Rūmi and Donne are also unique in terms of their individualistic methods of approaching the Divine. Rūmi is generally known to be the founder of a school of mysticism in Islam based on the essentially loving relationship between man and God. The poet, in other words, is known to have introduced a mystical system that is primarily founded on the amorous and approachable side of God. In this way, Rūmi's views are quite distinct from those of his contemporaries and predecessors, whose mysticism was quite often characterized by a strict sense of piety, as it had been prompted by an awareness of the fearful, strict nature of God. Rūmi is, thus, an innovator in the field of Persian mysticism. Throughout this dissertation, we will see how his deviation from both Islam and Islamic mystical orthodoxy informs all layers of his poetry and makes it immediately distinct from other works of the same kind.

In an astonishingly similar way, Donne, too, deviates from mainstream Christianity, primarily due to his peculiar approach to religion, which is in turn triggered by the poet's insight as a psychologist as well as his peculiar interest in the structure of human nature. The poet, as Grierson states, is constantly

analyzing his own moods, and this tendency endows his poetry with a special characteristic not seen in many others poets (12).

The English poet also deviates from mainstream Christian mysticism, as his poetry most of the time reflects an awesome image of God not common in the literature of its kind. This deviation primarily manifests itself in that large body of poems where the poet explicitly voices his concern in regards to the sins he has committed in the past. Donne's call for forgiveness, as pervasively heard throughout his devotional work, brings to mind a strict God much resembling the Hebrew God of righteousness.

Donne, it is essential to note at this juncture, is also known to deviate from the mainstream mystical tradition in Christianity in the significance he attaches to the suffering figure of Christ—as opposed to God himself—in decreasing the distance in the man-God relationship and eventually saving him from sin and despair. As will be seen in the third chapter, the poet in this case is essentially different from prominent Christians like St. Thomas, who have attached much less significance to Christ in this context. Donne's deviations from mainstream Christian mysticism are an important characteristic of his devotional poetry and will be thoroughly analyzed within different contexts throughout this thesis.

The intertwining of the two realms of poetic and mystical, moreover, reaches an amazingly refined stage in the work of both poets. The smooth blending of the poetic and the mystical traditions in the poetry of both Rūmi and Donne, as highlighted by scholars like E.I. Watkin, is a rare and difficult condition that has not been accomplished by many other poets.

The first of the five chapters of this dissertation will cover the lives and times of the two poets, to reflect the similar circumstances under which they were brought up and the common religious texture of their families and environment. The discussion will also highlight the differentiating factors in their lives that made of each individual, a poet of much religious refinement. The effort of chapter one will also be to illuminate the similarly implicit rebellious tendency against established order in the poetry of Rūmi and Donne.

The mechanisms of mistrust of orthodoxy operate differently for each poet. In Rūmi, the deviation from established order is revealed by a blunt rejection of the strict religious regulations set by the clergy, as well as the innovative approach he adopted to define his relationship with God. As already briefly discussed, Rūmi eventually succeeded in introducing a way of gaining proximity with the Divine that required only surrender to God and an unconditional belief in His love and bounty. Implicit in the survey of the poet's life is the historic encounter with Shams-i Tabrizi that revolutionized Rūmi's thought and lifestyle.

Donne's deviation from established order, in contrast, manifests itself in the first half of his life through adherence to Catholicism when the dominant religion of the time was Anglicanism as defined and required by the court. The discussion in the first chapter places Donne's writings within the religious context of his age. Special attention will be paid to the Jesuit teachings Donne received at an early age and the way they influenced his writings. In the second half of his poetic career and after Donne's conversion to Anglicanism, his poetry assumes a

different shape and my analyses of the poems in their respective contexts will elucidate the nature of this change. The first chapter will, moreover, highlight the basis of the deviation of Donne's mystical thoughts. At this point, it is essential to note that Donne's departure from the established religious order in both instances, in contrast to the nature of deviation in Rūmi's poetry, is due to an internally profound religious conflict and an indecisiveness that began to be resolved only towards the end of his career. Again, this important characteristic of Donne's poetry will be addressed in detail within different contexts in all of the other four chapters of this thesis.

Following the discussion of the similarities in the lives and times of both poets, the second chapter briefly explores the origins of Islamic and Christian mysticism, to highlight the shared philosophical background and some common elements between the works of the two poets. The discussion will then shift to the philosophical nature of both mystics' poetry as a significant bridge between the two, given that not all mystical literature is necessarily permeated with philosophical images as the works of Donne and Rūmi are. Moreover, Donne's poetry, as will be highlighted in detail in this chapter reveals a contention between older and new science and philosophy. Rūmi's work, in contrast, displays a consistent reference to, and familiarity with, philosophy in general, which does not incorporate the dialectic informing Donne's poetry.

Common to the two poets is a mutual insistence on the shortcomings of logic and philosophy in reaching God. The poetry of both mystics reveals the conviction that Truth is unapproachable via the senses. A detailed theoretical

discussion with explicit references to their poetry will further highlight the shared opinion of both poets about the insufficiency of intellect in finding Truth.

In this connection, it is essential to note that Donne does not altogether dismiss reason and certainty in his spiritual quest. In this sense, the poet resembles St. Augustine, who drew a line between faith and belief in the same context. According to M. J. Charlesworth,

> For Augustine reason has a value of its own, independently [sic] of its help to faith, for by implanting reason in man God had made him superior to the rest of creation. In fact, we could not believe unless we had rational souls. And again, reason can persuade the mind to rise to faith. This function of reason is anterior to faith and is contrasted with another function of reason, posterior to the act of religious belief, seeking to understand what is believed by faith. (26)

The discussion in chapter two will also highlight the essential similarities between St. Augustine's views and those of Donne in the emphasis laid upon the role of intellect in religion.

Interestingly enough, Rūmi displays the same tendency in attaching some degree of importance to the role of intellect. Anne-Marie Schimmel has written in this regard of how in Rūmi:

> Reason is appreciated as the faculty which enables man to fulfill his religious duties and to understand the Divine Law. Logically, Rūmi praises reason as long as it serves religion. But he is afraid, and that is again in congruence not only with the early Sufis but with the main body of orthodoxy that intensive intellectual activity without religious background is dangerous for man's spiritual progress. The intellectuals who split hairs are ridiculed, and *ziraki*, 'intelligence, cleverness' is once described as Satan's quality as contrasted with man's love; it should be sacrificed before the Prophet. (*The Triumphal Sun* 296-97)

The discussion in chapter two will also shed light on the implicit note of skepticism in Donne's work and juxtaposes it not only with Rūmi's spiritual work, which reveals a complete absence of the same intellectual unrest, but also with the work of a host of other Christian mystics who are known to be skeptics. For this argument, I have primarily drawn upon Itrat Husain's profound analysis of Donne's mysticism and how he eventually differentiates the mystic's skepticism as philosophical and as essentially distinct from the skeptical views of Montaigne.

In addition to the similarities in the nature of their mystical beliefs, the poetry of both Rūmi and Donne reveals a mutual interest in, and intellectual preoccupation with, the same topics. These subjects, of course, are most of the time addressed differently by each poet. The point of the third chapter is to

highlight common themes in the poetry of these two mystics and then elucidate the essential differences in the treatment of these themes that make their poetry unique in their kinds.

One of the common questions in Rūmi and Donne is the nature of the man-God relationship. Each mystic views himself differently in relation to God. The sense of obligation, in this case, is the defining characteristic of Donne's poetry. As will be demonstrated through representative poems and a detailed discussion of their imagery and figurative devices, Donne views his relationship with God mostly in terms of servitude and an unconditional and fearful sense of obedience.

For Rūmi, in contrast, no sense of obligation between man and God exists. In accordance with the other main tenets of his mystical belief, Rūmi views himself surrounded by God's love, and his poetry thus reveals a joyous sense of ecstasy inspired by that unconditional love. This sense of ecstasy, it is significant to note here, is also present in Donne's mystical work as in many other such poems, with the difference that the feeling of sublime excitement in the English poems arises from pain and a persistent sense of sin, and not joy. In Rūmi's joyous and harmonious world, there is no room for sin and personal unworthiness.

Donne's poetry, moreover, reveals an obsession with the notion of guilt that leads most of the time to a general sense of personal worthlessness. Rūmi's work, it is true, also reveals a preoccupation with sin and guilt, but, unlike Donne, he does not personalize that sense of guilt. Put differently, when the topic is human sin in Rūmi's poetry, he has the entire human race in mind and his poetry

does not address any personal shortcoming or sense of worthlessness the way Donne's work does. Donne's sensitive nature and the texture of his analytical mind, as already mentioned, substitute for the unconditional state of surrender to Divine as a prerequisite in all mystical conditions.

Religion thus becomes a major tool and a means of seeking salvation for Donne, as reflected throughout his devotional poetry. For Rūmi, in contrast, and in accordance with the general tenets of his mystical belief, religion does not have any such practical function, as he does not see the need to appeal to God for forgiveness of any particular sins.

In this connection one of distinguishing characteristics in the poetry of Donne and Rūmi is the significance attached respectively to Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad. For Donne, coming from the Christian tradition, the intermediary role of Christ as Savior is a defining and differentiating feature in his poetry. To Rūmi, although given as much significance and profile in his poetry, the Prophet does not have the vital role Christ has for Donne in the latter's drama of salvation. A detailed argument tracing the importance of the two prophets in the poetry of Rūmi and Donne will elucidate the exact nature and the respective roles of Christ and Muhammad for the two mystics.

The dissolution of the self and the separation of the individual from his immediate surroundings are among the main topics in any discussion of mysticism, and the poetry of both Rūmi and Donne shows a similar preoccupation with these notions. The two topics, although similar on the surface level, are

distinct from each other, and part of the discussion in chapter three will be devoted to clarifying this assertion.

In a related sense, as compared to other mystical traditions,[2] Islamic and Christian mysticism have much in common in allowing an ultimate distance between man and God. The comparison between these different traditions will address the shared characteristic of the separation of identity between man and God at the last stage in Christian and Islamic mysticism, and in contrast to the oriental religions.

Closely related to the concept of the dissolution of the self into the Divine is the distance the individual sees between himself and the world in mysticism. The poetry of both Rūmi and Donne almost unanimously voices their concern for people overvaluing the world. In a similar way, both mystics are highly articulate in their contempt of the world and the fact that the life on earth is a mere source of distraction for the individual in search of the Divine. Donne, however, once again seems to oscillate between a feeling of contempt for the world and that of overvaluing it, as the attraction of the mundane remained to occupy part of his attention at least until his religious career seriously began. Donne's uncertainty in not knowing whether he should devote himself thoroughly to God, or become involved—at least partly—in the affairs of the world and the flesh constitutes a major portion of this dissertation as the dilemma informs all layers of both his secular and spiritual poetry.

Along with both poets' conscious awareness of the transitory nature of life, the mutual contempt they have for the world, and the conspicuous, solemn

[2] Oriental schools of mysticism are a case in point.

tone in Donne's poetry—that quite often borders on despair—the work of both poets reflects an unconditional belief in the afterlife. This religious conviction thus creates a balance in tone in the poetry of both mystics and endows the poems with an unmistakable sense of optimism. I believe this general optimistic note and the eventually delightful perspective from which both poets view the world are significant bridges between Rūmi and Donne.

Among the other topics bearing considerable weight in Rūmi and Donne, and closely related to the transient nature of the world, is the concept of death. The works of both poets reveal an extensive preoccupation with the impending question of the eventual mortality of man. Rūmi accepts death with delight and considers it a stage in the whole process of man's spiritual progression. The poems that will be discussed in this connection reveal Rūmi's views on death from various perspectives, and the analyses of the representative poems will further clarify how Rūmi deals with this important question in the serene and enlightened manner in which he addresses all other questions in life.

Donne, in contrast, here as elsewhere, responds to death in a highly personalized manner, which reflects the analytical nature of his mind. This disposition of Donne's prevents him from surrendering to the will of God and intervenes with the eventual stage of mystical union. Put differently, the subjectivity with which Donne responds to all issues of life—death in this case—is a characteristic not welcomed or at least required for the mystic who has to let himself be drowned in the ocean of God's love regardless of all the positive and

negative, logical and illogical, and easy and difficult consequences of this surrender.

The concept of death is closely connected to the expedience of earthly love in the works of both poets. The views of both Rūmi and Donne, in regards to the importance of earthly love and its juxtaposition with spiritual love, are explored in detail in this chapter. Both poets, it should be noted, regard earthly love as a hindrance in the spiritual development of man if it is not transformed into divine love.

For Rūmi, there exists essentially no duality between earthly and spiritual love; from his perspective, earthly love would lead to divine if its transitory nature were to be kept in mind all the time. As will also be discussed in the last chapter of this thesis—which explores love in an entirely different context—the direct influence Donne had received from Catholicism in the dichotomy it draws between the flesh and the soul, makes his treatment of love not only different from that of Rūmi but also distinct from many other Christian poets like Petrarch, who were able to view love from a unified perspective.

The concept of unreliability of earthly love and its impermanence lead, in Donne, to a self-divided persona with a cynical tone. The cynicism that finds as its object the untrustworthiness of women is a quality not seen in Rūmi's poetry, which unswervingly addresses the entire human race with compassion, if not always respect, except where it is a question of the folly of mankind.

Chapter four will highlight the intellectual basis of the poets' devotional work and explore its manifestation throughout their poetry. In my opinion, the

intellectual character of the poetry of Rūmi and Donne is a vital link between the two that immediately differentiates them from other mystics, as mystical poems do not necessarily incorporate this distinct characteristic all the time. In this regard, Anne-Marie Schimmel has aptly stated that "Jalāloddin himself had studied all the sciences of his time, and he was not completely anti-intellectualistic, as one may conclude from some of his verses" (*The Triumphal Sun* 296). Schimmel elaborates on the topic by comparing Rūmi to Sanā'i, "[his] spiritual master, whose verse, written at a time when the consolidating Muslim orthodoxy became more and more suspicious of intellectual and mainly philosophical delvings, reflects the strictly legalistic mentality which distinguished the Eastern fringe of the Muslim world during the later Middle Ages" (*The Triumphal Sun* 296). The highly intellectual character of Donne's poetry does not need any further elaboration at this stage as it has already been addressed several times earlier in this introduction.

In their mutual insistence on the relative power of intellect as a guiding force in man's spiritual quest, both Rūmi and Donne establish a clear dichotomy between blind faith and its enlightened counterpart. The dangers of uninformed faith occupy an enormous part of both poets' works and are thus proportionately addressed in this thesis.

Following the distinction both poets make in regards to informed faith vis-à-vis blind obedience is the conviction that all religions are the same in essence. The concept of universality of all religions, however, is addressed differently in the work of each poet. When Rūmi highlights the notion of religious tolerance, he

mostly has the main religions in mind. For Donne, however, the concept of the essential unity of all religions appears mostly in connection with the similarities he sees between the different churches within Christianity. The poems that follow this general introduction in the fourth chapter will eventually highlight these essential similarities and differences.

The notions of universality of all religions and religious tolerance are responded to in highly distinct manners in the poetry of Rūmi and Donne. In congruence with all the other tenets of his religious and mystical belief, Rūmi accepts these concepts effortlessly and without any display of intellectual skepticism or dissatisfaction. For Donne, the conviction arrived after much deliberation about the similarities and differences between the different churches. Moreover, it may be recalled that in reaching this conviction Donne had taken some worldly matters into consideration, as will be discussed in detail in different parts of this thesis.

The intellectual nature of both poets' work also manifests itself in the groups of poems, whose subject matter is the relationship of individuals with one another and their interaction with the world. Despite the overall mystical and philosophical character of their work, morality and man's responsibility on earth are addressed extensively by both Rūmi and Donne. This intellectual tendency, moreover, reveals itself mostly in conjunction with the unreliability of 'self' in dealing with the outer world. Rūmi addresses the topic in a more allegorical manner by drawing a line between true self and its shadowy, and thus unreliable, reflection, as the numerous anecdotes throughout the *Maṣnavi* and the ghazals in

the *Divan* illustrate. He also refers to this rudimentary distinction when he addresses the notions of essence—here referring to God—and accident, as highlighted in the following poem:

> Do thou hear the name of every thing from the Knower:
> Hear the meaning of the mystery of *He taught him the Names.*
> With us, the name of every thing is its outward form; with
> The Creator, its inward essence.
> In the eyes of Moses the name of his rod was "staff"; in
> The eyes of God its name was "dragon."
> Here the name of 'Umar was "idolater"; but in eternity it
> Was "true believer."
> Before God, in short, that which is our end is our real
> Name. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 1238-42)

The dichotomy drawn here between true self and its unreal reflection is enforced through man's lack of power to make important distinctions, particularly when compared to God himself.

Donne, in contrast, not necessarily arising from a poetic tradition dealing allegorically with such concerns, is more explicit in highlighting the untrustworthiness of man's self in dealing with the world. My analyses of parts of "Satire I" and "Satire III" will highlight the dichotomy and by doing so, place the Christian poet in closer proximity to his Muslim counterpart.

The fusion of the poetic and mystical traditions, as already mentioned, is a major link between Rūmi and Donne. Yet, the more intellectual nature of Donne's poetry differentiates it from Rūmi's in regards to the latter's even and

smooth employment of figurative devices, his unloaded language, and the consistency of his tone. These characteristics of Rūmi's spiritual work, are undoubtedly in part related to his harmonious ideology and the fact that he did not have to come to terms with any tenet of his belief the way Donne had to. Rather, Donne's tone and expression in both phases of his career are clearly distinct from each other and from those of Rūmi in general; the analyses of representative poems from different periods of Donne's artistic career will elucidate this dichotomy.

The blending of the poetic and mystical realms is mostly conspicuous in poems belonging to both *Songs and Sonets* and the *Holy Sonnets* , which are modeled after Islamic meditative patterns. A detailed discussion of the adoption of the Jesuit Ignatian patterns of meditation, highly reflective of their Muslim counterparts, will place the discussion in perspective and reveal the smooth intertwining of the two worlds of the literary and the spiritual in Donne.

Orthodoxy, in general, bears a common significant impact on the works of the two poets. Numerous poems in the *Masnavi* and the *Divan* reveal Rūmi's profound knowledge of the Koran and the Islamic scholarship preceding him. Familiarity with the words and sayings of the prophet also manifests itself in Rūmi's poetry. In a similar way, Donne's poetry illustrates an extensive rapport with the Scripture and Christian scholarship. The analyses of a few poems that follow this argument clearly reveal the heavy reliance of Donne's poetry on the Scripture.

The incorporation of Koranic themes and the frequent references to the Holy Book, however, do not result in an unattractive treatment of subjects in Rūmi as usually happens when writers rely heavily on religious and/or theoretical texts. The lively tone and playful imagination of the poet, together with a host of images borrowed from real life compensate for the gravity of subject matter in most of the poems.

The absence of a monotonous tone and the general liveliness in Rūmi's work are unique qualities that do not apply to Donne's poetry, however. In Donne, solemn topics of religious nature are expressed most of the time in a strict and yet sincere tone.

What makes Donne's devotional poetry still appealing to his readers, and also makes the comparison between the two poets unavoidable in this respect, is this sincerity of Donne's tone that brings him close to Rūmi. In my opinion, the fact that Donne consistently personalizes his sense of guilt and fear—of death—contributes to the sincerity of his tone. Conversely, Rūmi's compassionate, intimate tone is the product of other artistic achievements that have already been discussed in detail.

The undeniable note of humbleness in the poetry of both Rūmi and Donne is another shared characteristic. Rūmi's consistently deferential tone is due to the poet's unified worldview and his effortless surrender to Truth, which makes his work unsurpassed in the entire canon of Persian mystical poetry. Donne, however, seems to be moving back and forth between extreme poles in displaying this humility as the technical analyses of the poems in this context will illustrate.

The last chapter of this thesis will be devoted to an examination of the allegorical nature of love in the work of both poets. The highly explicit erotic language and imagery in the poetry of Rūmi and Donne are elements that cannot be avoided by any scholar interested in the field of mystical poetry. In spite of this mutually important defining feature, however, the poetry of each mystic displays an epistemologically different approach to eroticism. In Rūmi's poetry, as in other canonical, classical works in Persian, eroticism—addressed mostly as an allegory—is at the center of the work and is not mechanically imposed on it. Eroticism, put differently, is not a decorative device in Persian mystical poetry, as it arises from the heart of the genre to reflect the intensive desire of union with God. Eroticism in Rūmi's poetry, in contrast to Donne's, is thus a common accepted means of describing the loving relationship between man and God.

For Donne, in contrast, the use of erotic imagery and language to explore the nature of the relationship between man and God is not as common or as naturally accepted as it is for the Persian poets. Despite the fact that Christian mystical texts, too, sometimes reflect the man-God relationship in terms of bride-bridegroom imagery, the allegorical treatment of love has a more or less decorative function in Donne's poetry in not being natural to his work. In my opinion, the striking character of Donne's erotic language owes much to the less common use of eroticism in Christian mystical literature in contrast to the inherently erotic nature of Persian mystical literature.

In regards to the erotic character of Donne's poetry, Harold Bloom has stated that Donne could visualize his relationship with God only in human terms

(47-48). Images of God as "rapist" and "Christ as the willing cuckold" (Bloom 47-48) do appear in Donne's devotional poetry and immediately distinguish it from Rūmi's work where the use of any such images—although still erotic—is nonexistent.

Part of the difference in the employment of erotic imagery in the work of the two poets is due to the conflict within Donne's mind in regards to the inherent discrepancies that relate to the dichotomy existing between the flesh and the soul in Catholicism. These inconsistencies are addressed in detail in my last chapter.

In closing, I should note that I have adopted the transliteration system developed by the Library of Congress. I have done my best to be consistent in following the conventions; some of the discrepancies seen in this regard are due to the use of other transliteration systems by different scholars in my exact citations from secondary sources.

Chapter One – The Context

The Life of John Donne

For a thorough study of the life of John Donne I have primarily narrowed down my research to Hughes' account of the poet's life, *The Progress of the Soul.* This book, though written quite sometime ago, is a comprehensive study of the life and works of this great seventeenth century English Metaphysical poet.

Donne was born into a Roman Catholic family in 1572, a period of high religious and political turmoil in England. His father, who claimed royal ancestry, died when Donne was hardly four years old. He was a caring husband and father and a successful businessman. In spite of his Catholic background, however, and although "his sympathies were probably not always with the religious policies of those in power, he was, ..., discreet enough to avoid giving any offence" (Bald 35-6). Donne's mother was a descendent of Thomas More's sister. Thomas More was beheaded by Henry VIII in 1535 for his faith in the Catholic Church and for having rejected the authenticity of England's Reformed Church with Henry VIII as its head. Having descended from such a family and being born during a time when Protestants were in power in England, the Catholic Donne was barred from "civil, ecclesiastic, or university careers" (Hughes 13) for to enter any one of these careers required taking the Oath of Supremacy which would give the ruling monarch both religious and political sovereignty, thereby refusing the Papal Supremacy (Hughes 13).

Shortly after the death of Donne's father in his early forties (Bald 36), his mother married again. Elizabeth Heywood's second husband was Dr. John Syminges, the president of the Royal College of Physicians and it is generally believed that Donne's frequent references to human physiology in his works owes much to this bond of familiarity.

Until he reached the age of twelve, Donne was tutored at home. According to Bald, there is no doubt now that "Donne's tutor was a good Catholic, perhaps even a seminary priest [...]" (39). Based on historical evidence, however, Bald dismisses the idea that his education had either been Jesuit or "even humanist in the best tradition of Sir Thomas More" (40). Eliot notes that Donne "[...] had presumably been instructed in the Latin classics, if not in the Greek, by his tutors, but he makes little use of them" (72). Eliot continues that, "[one] allusion makes us believe that he had read the *Divine Comedy*, or had the opportunity of doing so; but he was certainly very little affected by it" (Ibid).

In 1584 Donne is said to have entered the University of Oxford where he studied for three years until he transferred to Cambridge in 1587. While at Cambridge he became familiar with many literary figures of his time including Greene, Nashe and the three Harvard brothers (Bald 47). It was also during his Cambridge years that he "came upon some of the readings of Marlowe, who had already translated Ovid's *Amores*" that later served him as the main models of his love elegies (Bald 47). Donne did not, however, graduate from either of these two universities since his Roman Catholic faith prohibited him from complying with the articles of Henry VIII's English Reformed Church. The only two choices

he had for a future, therefore, were restricted to the study of either law or medicine, and he chose the former.

In 1591 Donne entered Thavies Inn and the following year he transferred to Lincoln's Inn. According to Hughes's confirmation of the note of Donne's biographer, Izzak Walton, Donne studied more than merely law while he was at the Lincoln's Inn; medicine, French, Latin, and Spanish were among the subjects to which he eagerly devoted his time (14). Nevertheless it was in law that he excelled; at the end of his stay at Cambridge and by the time his legal studies were coming to an end Donne, continues Hughes, "had managed to reinforce a naturally astute intelligence with enough juridical terminology and patterns of argumentation to serve him well in both his poetry and his later controversial prose works" (Hughes 15).

During his years as a law student Donne became excessively sad and dismayed at the sudden death of his younger brother in prison. Deeply shocked, Donne decided to accompany The Earl of Essex in 1596 on a privateering (a euphemism for *piratical*) raid against the Spanish colony of Cadez (Hughes 15). He followed the Earl of Essex a second time although the results of this last raid were not as satisfactory as the first. On a lesser scale, however, these trips turned out to be of much advantage to Donne who had come to know Sir Thomas Eagerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England and a member of Elizabeth's Privy Council during the Islands Voyage. According to Hughes the familiarity with Sir Eagerton resulted in his being chosen as a secretary by the latter. Working under the supervision of Sir Eagerton consequently led to Donne's

social and political ascent and advancement to the degree that he even became a member of the Parliament in 1601. Much to the dismay of the young politician, however, the Parliament was dissolved two months after Donne began his political career.

Shortly after the loss of his Parliamentary career Donne secretly married Ann More, the niece and ward to Sir Thomas Eagerton. Since at the time of their marriage Ann was barely seventeen and hence underage, their marriage was considered illegal. On a temporary basis the marriage had disastrous consequences for the couple, for Ann's father, George More, saw to it that Donne and his accomplices in the marriage be imprisoned; he even succeeded in convincing Sir Eagerton to put an end to Donne's services as a secretary. On a long term basis, however, the marriage was a happy one and the couple continued to enjoy each other's company until death separated them.

When finally after more than a year Donne was released from prison he found himself in a destitute situation. Having no job, position, or career he had no other choice than to agree to live on the charity of Ann's distant cousin, Sir Francis Woolley, who housed the couple in his own residence (Hughes 17). The couple remained at Sir Woolley's residence for two years, and Donne's works written during this time hint at the degree of his sense of humiliation, sadness and melancholy (Hughes 56). When the couple finally managed to move out, it was to Mitcham, a not altogether a decent place to reside in. Donne's references to his new residence as "my hospital at Mitcham" in several of his works hint at his strong sense of displeasure at being there (Hughes 56).

It was finally through his acquaintance with Thomas Morton, Dean of Gloucester from 1607 and future Bishop of Durham, that Donne finally started to ascend the ladder of social progress. The circumstances that resulted in Donne's advancement go back to the controversy that existed between the Catholics and the Protestants and the discovery of the "Gunpowder Plot" by means of which the Catholics had planned to "dispose of the King and Parliament and the Protestant power group in the forthright way of explosives, set to go off when King James was in attendance at Parliament" (Hughes 56). Once the plan was discovered the Catholics found themselves facing heavy charges and Thomas Morton was appointed to be the chief spokesman for the Anglican authorities and he chose Donne as his assistant in this case.

According to Hughes, Morton could hardly have found himself a better assistant and collaborator since Donne's thorough knowledge of the Catholic doctrine, "the apologetic and polemic literature of both sides of the quarrel" as well as his expertise in "the tactics of legal argumentation" came to much use during the legal procedures (56). Meanwhile these legal processions were having their effects on the mind of Donne and his future course of life. Although he still could not be called a follower of the Reformed church of England, he was no longer a devout Catholic.

The successful collaboration between Thomas Morton and Donne led to King James' extreme satisfaction with their accomplishments which ultimately led to Morton's appointment as the Dean of Gloucester. Morton's new position was, however, of a less promising nature for his assistant Donne, much to the

dissatisfaction of Morton and despite the former's sincere efforts to persuade him to follow him to the ministry, he was not yet ready to take such a big step. Nevertheless, a large body of Donne's greatest contribution to English letters belongs exactly to this controversial period in his life. The collection of religious sonnets (La Corona), together with twelve of the holy sonnets and two prose works, i.e. *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr* belonging to these years, reflect Donne's "rigorous searching into his own spiritual condition, a necessary prelude to his eventual decision to be ordained" (Hughes 57). According to Hughes it was in the time between the composition of these two prose works that Donne met Lucy, Countess of Bedford who over the years became his patron (58).

In 1610 Donne wrote "A Funeral Elegy" in the memory of Elizabeth Drury, Sir Robert Drury's only child. Although Hughes believes that the poet's intention for writing the elegy for the death of the fourteen year old child had not been altogether insincere, it is evident that Donne's main intention in doing so was to achieve Sir Drury's patronage (58). Shortly after writing the elegy Donne was given a small house in Drury lane for which he paid rent. Later he wrote "The First Anniversary," a succession to the elegy lamenting the death of the young girl as well as his own spiritual dilemma. While in France in 1611-1612 and in the company of the Drury family Donne wrote "The Second Anniversary" which is in a way "a completion of his self-examination" (Hughes 58).

Other poems including an elegiac poem contributed to the collection "Lachrymae Lachrymarum" honoring Prince Henry, the Prince of Wales (Hughes 59) and two marriage songs he wrote after his return from France reflect the

extent of the poet's search for patronage but since these endeavors did not result in any solid form of patronage he made the biggest decision of his lifetime and was "ordained a priest by Dr. John King, Bishop of London"(Hughes 59) in 1615.

Donne was appointed Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King James I after his ordination and in this way his connection with the royal family began (Hughes 226). According to Hughes, Donne's "finest sermons were delivered first to King James and then, from 1625, to King Charles I" (226). Although Donne is universally acknowledged as the greatest preacher of the seventeenth century his sermons were not restricted to the court only. Donne lived in London but he had two parish appointments in Keyston and Huntingdonshire.

In 1616 Donne was appointed Reader in Divinity to the students at Lincoln's Inn. He reluctantly left the office five years later after having made strong bonds with the law students in the course of the fifty sermons he had to deliver each year.

In 1617 Donne's wife, Ann, passed away and left Donne with a world of sorrow. Two years later and after the Thirty Years War had broken out in Germany Donne went to Germany with Viscount Doncaster as King James' envoy and Donne himself as Viscount Doncaster's Chaplain. Not only was it because of the dangers of such a journey but also because he had been suffering from intestinal cancer for a while that Donne thought he would not return from Germany. He did, however, return from Germany and in November 1621 he received "the post and the title in which he took greatest, and deserved, pride: he was named Dean of St. Paul's in London."(Hughes 227). According to Hughes,

"it was in this post that Donne achieved his greatest success as a preacher" (227). Following this great event in Donne's life he was appointed "Vicar of St. Dunstan's, a west London parish" in the spring of 1624 (Hughes 228). As Hughes has noted he became seriously ill in the summer of 1630 and passed away shortly after delivering his last sermon "Death's Duel" which to many of his auditors appeared to be his own funeral sermon (228).

The Life Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi

Like Donne, Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn Bahā al-Dīn Muhammad known as Rūmi in the West and Mawlānā inside Iran was born into a religious family. At the time of his birth, i.e. the year A.H. 604 / A.D. 1207, his parents lived in Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan, which was then a part of Iran and had flourished considerably under the rule of the Muhammad the great Shāh of Khawrazm (Nicholson 17).

Jalāl's father, Bahā al-Din Muhammad known as Bahā-i Valad, was a renowned clergy and preacher. As noted by Abdul-Hussein Zarrin-Kūb, Bahā-i Valad's ancestry went back to Abūbakr Ṣeddīq, the third Caliph (21). From the maternal side, Zarrin-Kūb notes that Jalāl was descended from the Prophet himself (21).

Bahā-i Valad was the author of *Ma'ārif*. In this book he "demonstrates his firm faith in Islamic revelation and undertakes an outspoken defense of its spiritual and esoteric teachings as opposed to the blind legalism of so many of his contemporaries" (Chittick 1). In many instances, Chittick continues, Bahā-i

Valad "wields the sword of intellectual and spiritual discernment against the politics and opinions of such men as Muhammad Khārazmshāh, the ruler of the time, who sometimes attended his sermons; and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzi, the famous theologian and author of several classics of Islamic thought who also lived in Balkh" (1). Inside the house, however, Bahā-i Valad would hardly mention politics or criticize rigid religious regulations upheld by so many contemporaries of his profession; instead while at home he used to talk of Allah and his deep love for him. It was in this home that Jalāl grew up. Moreover, Zarrin-Kūb notes that as a child and when he was only 5, Jalāl (called by his father, while still very small "Khodāvandigār" or "His Almighty") was endowed with supernatural powers (19).

Around the year 616 / 1219 the Mongols were preparing to attack Balkh (Chittick1). It was at this time that Bahā-i Valad decided to leave Balkh with his family and a large group of his followers for the holy pilgrimage to Mecca (Chittick 1-2). On their way to Mecca, Bahā-i Valad visited with Shaykh Farid al-Dīn Aṭṭār, the great Persian mystical poet and a close friend of Bahā-i Valad. At the time of this meeting Jalāl was only thirteen years old but he managed to impress the Saint to a degree that he presented him with a copy of his *Asrārnāmah (The Book of Mysteries)* and told his father that Jalāl would have a glorious future. As Zarrin-Kūb has noted, during this visit Jalāl heard the two old friends talk about Sanā'ī's poetry with which Jalāl had already been familiar through the teachings of his tutor Sayyed Borhān al-Din Moḥaqqeq-i Tarmaẓi, a former student of Bahā-i Valad and a renowned Sufi. Jalāl's works, it is noteworthy,

reflect his indebtedness to the poetry of these two great leaders of Persian mystical poetry (Schimmel 37). *Shāhnāmah (The Epic of Kings)* and other major Persian and Arabic works of literature are, as noted by Schimmel, among other sources with which Jalāl was thoroughly familiar (41).

Upon their arrival in Baghdad, Bahā-i Valad decided to stay there for a while. The four year period of their residence in a seminary school in Baghdad provided Jalāl with an excellent opportunity to learn the Arabic language and literature more thoroughly, although he had already some basic familiarity with them (Zarrin-Kūb 55). From Baghdad the family moved to Larnade, known as Gharāmān in present day Turkey. While in Larnade, Jalāl always attended his father's sermons and, hence excelled in the art of preaching so that when his father died a few years later in Qonyah, the twenty-four year old Jalāl could easily take over his father's position as a preacher. It was in Larnade that Jalāl's mother passed away and it was in the same city that he married Gohar Khātūn, the daughter of Khawjah Sharaf al-Dīn Samarqandī. It is noteworthy that for neither of these two events, Jalāl is said to have become either excessively emotional or excited; he was beginning to learn not to be overwhelmed by the transient phenomena of life.

During the time the family lived in Larnade, Bahā-i Valad received an invitation from Alā al-Dīn Kayqobād-avval, the Seljuk King to go to Rum and reside there. Bahā-i Valad, upon the insistence of Alā al-Dīn Kayqobād-avval, decided to respond positively to the invitation and moved there with his family and followers (Zarrin-Kūb 63). According to Chittick, Bahā-i Valad was warmly

received in Qonyah by the king and "his erudite vizier Mo'īn al-Dīn Parvānah, who was later to become one of Rūmi's most influential devotees" (2). Bahā-i Valad soon found his place among the city's scholars and the title "Sultan al-'Ulamā," "Sultan of the men of Knowledge" given to him indicates the lofty position he occupied among his contemporaries (Chittick 2).

While in Qonyah, Jalāl's old tutor Sayyed Borḥān al-Din joined him and it was under his supervision once again that Jalāl focused on refining his soul by staying awake during nights praying and weeping. In this way, writes Zarrin-Kūb, Jalāl was gradually moving from the rigid path of jurisprudence of religion to the more sublime path of jurisprudence of Allah, from the logic of "sharī'a" to the secret knowledge of "tarīq'a," and from the logic of knowledge to the logic of certainty (92). Schimmel too has stated that "Rūmi [had] spent, on Borhanoddin's advice, a long time in Syria to meet the mystical leaders" (16). She quotes Sepahsālār and continues that while in Syria, Jalāl had seen "Ibn Arabi (di.1240), Sa'doddin-i Hamavi, Owḥadoddin-i Kirmani and many other Sufis of Ibn Arabi's circle" (16). The years he thus spent under the supervision of Sayyed Borhān al-Dīn ultimately turned him into a true Sufi and at the age of 33, after the death of his dear tutor and upon his return to Qonyah, Jalāl was considered by all the greatest preacher of his age (Zarrin-Kūb 92-93). Nevertheless and in spite of his worldwide fame Jalāl, like his father, was very humble. Although his company was always being sought by people of authority and influential groups he almost always avoided them and, following his father's doctrine, he would always criticize the misuse of power, whether religious or political. His humbleness and

sociability drew different classes of people to him, however, according to Arberry, he "never approv(ed) that his acts of benevolence should be noised abroad" (222). In fact he regarded his knowledge and expertise as fruitless and non-practical in spite of the fact that he was highly respected by everybody for his extensive knowledge.

Following the path of inner knowledge, everything soon started to appear sham and vain to Jalāl. He was still deliberating over the detailed questions of the science of jurisprudence and other similar subjects (Zarrin-Kūb 101) when he met Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn-Ali Tabrīzī, the person who radically altered his life. It is believed that one day when Jalāl was walking through a bazaar with a group of followers after his daily sermons, Shams, a wandering Sufi from the city of Tabrīz whom nobody knew in Qonyah, stopped him and queried whom he considered to have a greater place with God, the Prophet Muhammad or Bāyazīd-i Basṭāmī, the celebrated mystic and a true seeker of Truth. When Jalāl teased him for the profanity implied by the question, Shams is said to have ridiculed the clergyman and rebuked him for his shortsightedness. The question that shook Jalāl was one that had put sharī'a face to face with tariq'a; the question that introduced him into a new realm—one that left man no other choice than to deny himself (his ego) to reach perfection (Zarrin-Kūb 108).

After this encounter Jalāl experienced a moment of epiphany; he found, however, that his eyes had been opened too late. Chittick writes that Shams' "influence upon Rūmi was decisive, for outwardly he was transformed from a sober jurisprudent to an intoxicated celebrant of the mysteries of Divine Love"(3).

Chittick further emphasizes that without Shams there would have been no Rūmi. Nevertheless as Chittick and other biographers of Rūmi have indicated one can not overestimate the role of Shams in Rūmi's mystical career since "Rūmi was already an accomplished adept when Shams arrived on the scene" (Chittick 3). It is true, however, "that Shams may have guided him into the realization of certain stations of perfection to which he had not already gained access" (3).

In this way and by choosing seclusion and the private company of Shams, Jalāl rid himself of all the ostentatious possessions of the clergy. School, schoolwork, teaching, preaching and even reading no longer appealed to him and even if every once in a while he picked up a book to read, Shams would take the book from him and throw it away, insisting that reading would create a gap between him and Allah. Instead, during the hours that they spent together Shams taught Jalāl all the minute secrets of Sufism that could not be put into words. These points were communicated to Jalāl through the semiotic language of looking, silence, and dance. Jalāl was almost always silent during these hours and he would only listen to Shams' voice which to him was the very voice of Revelation (Zarrin-Kūb 122). When finally after several months he walked out of seclusion he was nothing like the Jalāl who was passing by the cotton bargainers' bazaar some three months earlier. (Zarrin-Kūb 123). Nevertheless Jalāl's sudden strong attachment to Shams as well as Shams' unpleasant way of addressing Jalāl's followers aroused the anger and jealousy of Jalāl's followers which culminated in Shams's departure from Qonyah. Jalāl is said to have become deeply wounded by Shams' sudden absence and after a while he is said to have

sent his elder son, Sultan-i Valad, with a group of twenty of his followers to Damascus to plead Shams' return. The company returned with Shams and Sultan-i Valad who, as reported by Zarrin-Kūb, had walked all the way back to Qonyah from Damascus holding the reins of Shams's horse (133). Shams was warmly welcomed in Qonyah and after some time found that he was in love with Kīmīyā Khātūn, the daughter of Kerā Khātūn Qunavī, whom Jalāl had married shortly after his first wife's death. For a period of time Shams is believed to have found comfort in the company of his young wife who had started to become ever more annoyed by Shams' excessive love for her. The death of Kīmīyā Khātūn shortly after her marriage as well as the concern of Jalāl's followers over the strong ties between Shams and their leader one more time led to Shams' disappearance from Qonyah, and this time he never returned. Jalāl became deeply sad after Shams's disappearance; he could not accept that Shams had left again; his memory was to him the memory of God (Zarrin-Kūb159) and he could not imagine himself living without Shams. Separation from Shams this time was becoming unbearable; instead he immersed himself in the world of dance, poetry, and *sama'a* (whirling dance). All of these were, of course, manifestations of his inner transformation (Zarrin-Kūb161). He again dispatched Sultan-i Valad to Damascus who he returned with no news of Shams. According to Arberry, "Rūmi is said himself to have made a prolonged journey to Damascus in quest of his beloved friend and it has been suggested that the whirling dance of his Order, to the accompaniment of plaintive music form the reed-pipe, commemorates this desperate and fruitless search" (216). At last and once he realized that Shams could not be found

anywhere, he focused on an inner search for his beloved and to his own surprise he rediscovered Shams through this inner and mystic illumination.

Shams' disappearance had occurred at exactly the right moment, writes Zarrin-Kūb, since had Shams remained in Qonyah, Jalāl would have forever remained within his bonds and would not have succeeded to achieve the high stage of selflessness (168). Shams' memory, Jalāl's love for him, and separation from him became the subject matter of all his sonnets. As noted by Chittick, however, "unlike most Sufi poets – or Persian poets in general – Rūmi practically never ends a ghazal with his own name, but either mentions no one or refers to Shams or certain other figures" (4), thereby suggesting that he and Shams are one and the same. The sonnets he wrote would invite him to the whirling dance culminating in "*vajd*," or the state of "excessive joy" (Zarrin-Kūb170).

Jalāl was becoming ever more sensitive to the sound of music at this period of his life to the degree that even the mere sound of spinning of a mill would set him to the whirling dance. Zarrin-Kūb writes that as Jalāl was once passing by the goldsmiths' bazaar the rhythmic sound of hammers striking anvils caused him to start dancing right in front of the store of Salāh al-Dīn Zarkūb, coincidentally one of his devotees. Salāh al-Dīn, is said to have asked his employees not to stop working while Jalāl was dancing. As reported, he also joined Jalāl and the two danced for hours. In an act of selflessness, Salāh al-Dīn is said to have given away all the gold in his store to the needy passing by and to his employees.

Salāh al-Dīn later took a similar place as occupied by Shams in Jalāl's life. The ten years Jalāl spent in close company with this simple old man from the laity were the culminating years of *sam'ā* and writing sonnets in the former's life (Zarrin-Kūb195). It is noteworthy that Jalāl considered *sam'ā* a form of prayer and had to argue constantly with the orthodox clergy to convince them of the harmlessness of this spiritual practice. Jalāl composed numerous sonnets in Salāh al-Dīn's name and also wrote an elegy on the occasion of his death.

Upon the death of Salāh al-Dīn Jalāl chose the close company of Hesām al-Dīn Chalabi but due to the latter's young age Jalāl did not make his decision public for five years. Throughout this time Jalāl was actively involved in writing poetry and performing *sam'ā* gatherings at nights during the course of which he would compose poetry and stories and parables in verse. It was at this time that Hesām al-Dīn requested the writing of the *Maṣnavi*[3] and Rūmi is said to have readily given him the opening 18 lines of it called "Naynāmah," or "The Song of Reed." The *Maṣnavi,* it is noteworthy, is composed of six books and each book took Jalāl two years to write. To Hesām al-Dīn's company is attributed the peace of mind and the tranquility Jalāl reached that in turn enabled him to complete his remarkable work, *the Maṣnavi* (Zarrin-Kūb 221) often referred to as "The Koran in the Pārsi (Persian) language." The 25000 verses that make up the *Maṣnavi* centre on mystical topics as well as moral and religious ones, illuminated through stories, parables, and verses form the Koran (Safā 450). Hesām al-Dīn's role in

[3] Maṣnavi is a long didactic poem in rhyming couplets narrating a story or a parable and quite often mystical in content. The *Maṣnavi-ye Manavi,* referred to as *the Mathanvi,* due to its unique nature is Rūmi's valuable contribution to the treasury of Persian poetry and most specifically "maṣnavis" with which it is grouped.

the composition of the *Maṯnavi* duly acknowledged at the beginning of each book.

His turbulent life notwithstanding, Jalāl was able to reach remarkable heights. His poetry is considered to be among the most refined ever written in the Persian language. According to Yusufi, the originality of style and subject matter make Jalāl's poetry unprecedented in Persian literature (210). Yusufi further states that Jalāl is even different from Hafiz, one of the most renowned Persian poets, since in many instances the latter is believed to be under the influence of his predecessors (211). His *Divān-i Shams--i Tabrīzī* totaling 40,000 verses is a collection of sonnets embodying the poet's intense emotions conveyed in a lively, excited language. His works in prose are "*Fīh-i mā Fīh*," "*In It Is What Is In*," "*Makātīb*," "*Letters*," and "*Majales-e Sabe*," "*Seven Sessions*."

Jalāl died at the age of 68 and before he could finish the sixth book of *the Maṯnavi*. His shrine in Qonyah is daily visited by lovers of poetry from all over the world.

Chapter Two – The Philosophical Fundamentals of Belief

The task of comparing the religious poetry of Rūmi and Donne is primarily a typological (classificatory) one. Both Rūmi and Donne were mystic poets who stood at the height of poetic expression in sharing their sublime spiritual experiences with their fellow men through the art of poetry. When Helen C. White quotes T. S. Eliot stating "[t]he capacity for writing poetry is rare; the capacity for religious emotion of the first intensity is rare; and it is to be expected that the existence of both capacities in the same individual is rarer still" (22) she is indeed highlighting this unique feature in the English Metaphysical poet that can through comparison become a major defining characteristic in Rūmi too. Rūmi and Donne are two rare literary masters in whom the poetic and religious accomplishments blend together to the most refined degree. It is mainly on these grounds that a comparative study of their works becomes an attraction for a scholar in the field.

Rūmi's gifts as a mystic and an ardent explorer of the Divine have been reported as early as when he was only six years old (Zarrin-Kūb, *Step by Step to Meet God* 26). Having been brought up in an environment of spirituality, he had been taught from the earliest years of his childhood to look for "the beyond" in every issue (Zarrin-Kūb, *Step by Step to Meet God* 26). Unlike the other children of his age he refrained from eating delicious food and instead would take pleasure in long periods of prayer and meditation (Zarrin-Kūb, *Step by Step to Meet God* 26). A few years later when the family had to leave Balkh, and as it was passing by Nayshābūr, the great spiritual master and poet of the time, Attār, expressed his

astonishment at the advanced state of the young Rūmi's spiritual quest in a meeting he had with him and his father. During that meeting Attār predicted Rūmi would never be a preacher, theologian, or even a Sufi of a regular status; he would be the greatest master of his time, Attār foresaw[4] (Zarrin-Kūb, *Step by Step to Meet God* 50).

In a similar context Joe Nutt in his book *John Donne: the Poems*, discusses the intense nature of Donne's pursuit of Truth throughout his life. He writes that "Donne [was] unique amongst English poets for the sincerity and depth with which he contemplated his relationship with his God and the universe" (143). The depth and seriousness with which the poet explored metaphysical issues and his relationship with the Divine place him among the few unique poets of his class. In Nutt's words, "[we] might even be surprised when we reflect that, in the entire canon of English poetry, no other poet shows such concern for the state of his spiritual health. Whether we conclude that this says more about Donne than it does about English poets is a matter for much broader critical debate" (143).

The description by Donne's earliest biographer, Izaak Walton, highlights the unique intertwining of the two realms in his poetry quite effectively. Walton writes that "Donne was not just a seventeenth-century poet with a religious streak, but a religious man with a poetic streak. For Donne, both art and life were

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[4] In his insightful comparative analysis of recent English translations of Rūmi, and particularly the ones belonging to Coleman Barks, i.e., *The Essential* Rūmi and *The Glance: Songs of Soul-Meeting*, David Barber reveals the mechanisms at operation in the hands of the amateur translators in making Rūmi a pop-culture icon in the West. Towards the end of his argument, however, Barber introduces Rūmi to his audience as "Rūmi" and not as "Roomi" as portrayed by Barks and his like and loved by their fans. At a certain point of this introduction, the critic quotes Attār who upon "spotting the boy Rūmi towing after his guv'nor" had said: "Here comes the sea followed by an ocean" (193).

unquestionably rooted in a fervent divinity that informed the course of his entire life, and the meaning, power, and appeal of virtually all his best works rest in some sense on a body of religious convictions to which he devoted intense emotional and intellectual effort from his youth on" (qtd. in Sellin1).

As E. I. Watkin writes, however, the two paradigms of artistic expression and mystical experience do not function similarly: "These two intuitions—the artistic-aesthetic of significant form, and this mystical intuition of a union with a Reality Formless because exceeding all form are wholly distinct in nature. Nor can they be fused into one and the same experience. Each excludes the other. Where one is, to employ a spatial metaphor, the other cannot be"(12). It is therefore mainly by focusing on the gap separating these two essentially different paradigms as well as the excelling accomplishment of both poets in both of the two fields that a systematic comparison of their works becomes meaningful and compulsory for any scholar interested in either or both of the two paradigms. In other words, in the poetry of both Rūmi and Donne the poetic and mystical intuitions develop simultaneously to levels of refinement rarely found in other renowned mystic poets.

It is important at this stage to examine the word "mysticism" with its broad range of denotations and quite often ambiguous connotations in both Christianity and Islam, as the word will be used extensively in this chapter in regards to the outstanding spiritual dimension of the poetry of both Donne and Rūmi. The supreme quest of the spirit of man in different countries and during the ages has been the search for God and a yearning of the human soul for union

with the Source. As Miss Underhill writes, there are major features characterizing the great mystics of all religions: "Their point of departure is the same, the desire of spirit for the spiritual, the soul's hunger for its home. Their object is the same, the attainment of that home, the achievement of Reality, union with God" (*The Mystic Way* 15). Moreover, as stated by Joseph B. Collins, "[the] writings of the mystics, irrespective of time or country, show forth a number of common features. They reveal an attempt on the part of the individual soul to arrive at a self-proposed Object, conceived as apart from itself in terms of the Absolute and final Reality. They also indicate an enjoyment of communion or intimate union with the Object, this Reality, this Divine Being, a union commonly transient, even momentary in character, which brings the soul to further longing, to greater purification, and to a deeper contemplation" (1).

The Wordsworth Dictionary of Beliefs & Religions succinctly defines mysticism as "[t]he spiritual quest for the most direct experience of God, or—in nonreligious terms—a hidden wisdom. The need for such a search is partly explained in Tagore's[5] belief that 'man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds himself" (Goring 355). In a more specific sense, Underhill writes that "in mysticism the will is united with the emotions in an impassioned desire to transcend the sense-world. In order that the self may be joined by love to the one eternal and Ultimate Object of love; whose existence is intuitively perceived by that which we used to call the soul, but now find it easier to refer to as the 'cosmic' or 'transcendental' sense" (*Mystisicm* 71). Even a

[5] Sir Rabindranath Tagore, (1861-1941) was the Indian poet and philosopher who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

superficial look at the poetry of Rūmi and Donne reveals a similarly extensive preoccupation of both poets with matters metaphysical and spiritual in spite of the differences that exist between the two religious traditions. The "spiritual quest" takes undeniably different courses once the search for the union with the Beloved starts.

It is important to note, however, that in spite of the differences seen in the addressing of the Divine, and in defining one's relationship to the Source, the two Islamic and Christian mystical systems have much in common. Mysticism, Islamic or otherwise, is generally believed to have originated from the West in the influence it received from Platonic and Plotanic writings. Plato's speculations about the nature of the supernatural and his mystical method have much in common with Plotinus's views on the subject that have influenced Christian mysticism respectively (Collins1-14) . As Michael Sells also writes, "An overview of Western apophasis would begin with Plotinus (d. 270 C.E.). It was Plotnius who wove these elements and his own original philosophical and mystical insights into a discourse of sustained apophatic intensity" (5). Sells continues that, "After centuries of Neoplatonic writings (some more apophatic than others), a mysterious writer of the sixth century C.E. who wrote under the name of Dionysius, the companion of Saint Paul, placed apophatic discourse centrally within the Christian tradition" (5).

In a more or less similar way Islamic mysticism is said to have been influenced by Greek and Egyptian writers, among many others. Stepaniants reports that "A philosophical study of Islamic mysticism reveals the process of the

spiritual evolution undergone by Islamic society. Though in the Muslim world the term 'philosophy' was associated mainly with Peripateticism, and to a lesser degree with Platonism and NeoPlatonism, the development of philosophy was significantly promoted by religiophilosophic trends, including Sufism..." (8). In her study, Stepaniants concludes how Islamic mysticism has been influenced by "Vedantism, Gnosticism, NeoPlatonism, Zoroastrianism, and Christian mysticism" (8).

Moreover it is generally true that the essence of all religions can most effectively be discovered in the mystical schools through the systematic approach they take to elucidate the nature of the Divine and to proximate the individual and the Divine. In this regard, Leonard Lewisohn convincingly argues how Sufism is "the central facet of traditional Islam" ("Iranian Islam and Persianate Sufism"12) and quotes Victor Danner who has written in *The Islamic Tradition* how it (Sufism) "constitutes [Islam's] very essence" ("Iranian Islam and Persianate Sufism"12). In this connection, Martin Lings also writes that "The concentrated essence of Islam is only to be found in the Sufi Saint who, by reaching the End of the Path, has carried the particular ideals of his religion to their highest and fullest development, just as the concentrated essence of Christianity is only to be found in a St Francis or a St Bernard or a St Dominic" (22). Lings continues the argument by saying that "not only the universality but also the originality of each particular mysticism increases in intensity as the End is approached. Nor could it be otherwise inasmuch as originality is inseparable from uniqueness, and this, as well as universality, is necessarily increased by nearness to the Oneness which

confers it" (22). In this way and despite the differences in the mystical route, the common grounds that will be explored in the religious poetry of Donne and Rūmi will not only highlight the similarity of the poets' individual poetic and mystical experiences, but also the commonality of the mystical beliefs shared by the two religions.

In their unwavering quest to find union with the Divine as reflected in the passionate poetry of both poets and with regards to the different definitions and interpretations of the word "mysticism," both Rūmi and Donne can be said to be mystics. This search assumes a variety of shapes in the works of mystic poets and writers of even the same tradition, let alone two individuals so wide apart in religion and language, to name only a few of the differences functioning on the surface level of this comparison. Persian mysticism as reflected in Persian Sufi literature, for instance, writes Nasr "is associated with the Spiritual Path (*al-tarīqa ilā' Llāh* in Arabic, or, as they say in Persian: *taīrīq-i sū-yi Haqq*), and all that is involved therein. That is why most Sufi literature, even its poetry, seems to deal with ethics, not so much with what to do and what not to do, but with an ethics which is internalized, that is to say, concerned with the transformation of man's entire being—for without becoming a new being one cannot see things in a new way" ("Persian Sufi Literature: its Spiritual and Cultural Significance" 3).

Rūmi, it is essential to know, is more concerned with the less philosophical, more pantheistic aspects of mysticism, and Watkin's general statement about mystics who see God "immanent in all his creatures" (17) is undeniably ubiquitous in Rūmi's work. The numerous allegorical stories

throughout the *Masnavi* as well as the shorter sonnets of the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi* repeatedly highlight this basic tenet of Rūmi's mysticism. The following lines from a *ghazal*[6] from the *Divan* is exemplary in this regard:

> This world is but foam and God's attributes, the sea,
> The foam of the world veils the purity of the sea.
> Tear away the foam to reach the water beneath,
> Do not look at the foam of the sea, as it is a veil.
> Do not look at the earthly and heavenly shapes,
> As they are veils only.
> To reach at the core of meaning, tear open the shell of expression,
> Since hair covers the beauty of idols.
> Discard any guesses you may have for spotting veils,
> As those guesses are veils themselves for you.
> This transient world is the sign of God,
> But it veils God's virtue (at the same time.) (Furūzānfar 1998, Ghazal 921, 3-8)

Rūmi, as seen in the above lines, can see God everywhere in nature; the sea, its foam, and all the creatures on land and in sky allude to Him. It is, however, important to delve deep into the sea to reach at its essence; the foam in the sea as all the creatures in the world are but shadows and signs of the Divine. In this regard and in his extensive analysis of the *Divan*, Ali Dashti writes how Rūmi views the entire world as a reflection of the everlasting Essence, and how he could therefore see all phenomena in life as beautiful and inspiring (12). What makes the poem different from other examples of its kind, moreover, is the fact

[6] A Persian Sonnet

that Rūmi encourages his audience here to move one step ahead in not equating the beauty and luster of the material world with the everlasting, permanent Beauty and Truth.

Imagery and figurative devices throughout the poem consistently highlight the same thought: the shell of words should be discarded to find meaning in expression and the hair has to be combed to the side of the Beloved's face to reflect the beauty of God. As seen in these analogies, the shell of expression and the hair of the Beloved function similarly as the creatures in the world and the foam at sea; they all allude to a higher state and meaning.

Rūmi's sensitivity to natural beauty and the awe it arouses in him are indications of this feature of his mystical belief. As seen in the following lines on their surface level, with the arrival of spring, every tree and flower in nature turns beautiful and lively:

> The green spring arrived and the Beloved's messenger too,
> We are drunk and in love, infatuated and impatient.
> Oh cypress listen, as lily based on your account
> Has become all tongue (talking) along the brook.
> Blossoms are everywhere and your countenance opens knots,
> Blossoms open because of you and bestow themselves on you.
> .....
> The branch bearing fruit is proud from happiness,
> The one barren is ashamed and sorry.
> This happens to the trees of the Soul as well,
> The lucky tree bearing nice branches will arrive. (Furūzānfar 1998, Ghazal 1121, 1, 5-6, 9-10)

On a deeper level, moreover, the line bearing the metaphor of "the trees of the Soul" relates the spring in nature with all its beauty to the fruitful journey of the soul. This highly mystical theme, as explicit towards the end of the poem, is introduced through natural elements and at the same time exposes Rūmi's unwavering admiration for the beauty of nature.

At this stage of the discussion, it is important to make a distinction between general or naturalistic pantheism, on the one hand, and mystical pantheism—being the defining characteristic of Rūmi's belief—on the other. The monism of Rūmi's belief, allows for one God only. Ibn Arabi, the great Sufi master and contemporary of Rūmi has summarized the monism of the system. In her extensive research on Sufism, and as quoted in *Wisdom of the Prophets*, Marietta Stepaniants quotes Ibn Arabi in saying: "From its existential unity, the shadow is God himself, for God is the Unique (al-wāhid), the One (al-ahad); and in respect of multiplicity of sensible forms, it is the world" (24). "*Wahdat al-wudjūd*" a principle key term used in the context of Islamic mysticism or *Irfan*,[7] considers God as the sole, independent creator of the world and all else in the world as His reflection and dependent on Him. More specifically and as elaborated on by Sayyed Hossein Nasr, the Sufi doctrine of the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) is based on the basic principle of Unity in Islam, expressed in "the first *Shahādah, Lā ilāha illa'Llāh*, usually translated as 'there is no divinity but the Divine,' but which in its most profound sense means there is no reality

[7] Chittick in "Sufism: Name and Reality" has defined *irfan* or *ma'rifah* as "recognition" or "knowledge"(22). He expands on the definition by stating that "the term connotes a special, deeper knowledge of things that can only be achieved by personal transformation. Often the goal and fruit of this type of knowledge is explained by citing the Prophet's saying, 'He who knows [`arafa] himself knows his Lord'" (22).

outside of the Absolute Reality, thereby negating all that is other than Allah" (*An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* 4, 5). In a similar context and in the light of our common understanding that the term "wujūd" means "existence," Toshihiko Izutsu, writes of how "the problem of existence was from the very beginning of the history of Islamic philosophy *the* metaphysical problem that Islam inherited from the tradition of Greek philosophy"[8] (*Creation and the Timeless Order of Things* 70).

Stepaniants writes that, "*Wahdat al-wudjud* belongs to the variety of religio-philosophical doctrines that may be defined a mystical pantheism" (24). She further draws a distinction between mystical pantheism and its naturalistic counterpart and writes that "Contrary to the naturalistic pantheism that dissolves God in nature, its maxim being 'God is All,' mystical pantheism dissolves nature in God, insisting on the principle "All is God" (24). As evident in the *ghazals* already discussed, the pantheism inherent in Rūmi's poetry is peculiar to Islamic mysticism and is clearly different from pantheism in oriental religions and, of course, Christianity.

The religious poetry of Donne is different from that of Rūmi's in not addressing any particular pantheistic issues, mystical or otherwise. Donne having been more familiar than any of his contemporaries with the ideologies of his time, is more concerned with the philosophical as well as the religious and moral sides

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[8]Izutsu goes on to say that "in the earlier periods of Islamic philosophy, represented by such names as al-Kindí, al-Fárábí, Ibn Síná, and Ibn Rushd, *wujūd* or "existence," in the sense of the act of exiting, was an object of philosophical concern only indirectly and, let us say, accidentally, in the sense that, following the age-old Aristotelian tradition of metaphysics, the primary concern of the thinkers was with *mawjūd* rather than wujūd, that is to say, "existent" or a concrete thing that exists rather than the act itself of existing. The problem of wujūd was raised and discussed mainly as part of the inner constitution of "existents," i.e. real things that exist (*Creation and the Timeless Order of Things* 70).

of religion and hence his mysticism assumes a different shape. Nowhere throughout the secular and religious poetry of John Donne can one locate the pantheistic reference to the world of nature so prevalent in Rūmi. As highlighted by Gardner, "[in] his almost total blindness to the beauty of the natural world [Donne] reveals a lack of that receptivity, that capacity for disinterested joy which is one of the marks of the spiritual man" (xvii). The lack of interest in the beauty of the natural world which Gardner believes is an essential characteristic of the spiritual man is, however, compensated in Donne by his acute sense of pain that will be discussed shortly.

In comparison to Rūmi, Donne's mystical poetry is of an intense philosophical nature. "Metaphysical poetry" in particular and to quote Grierson, "has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role of the human spirit in the great drama of existence" (1). John Donne's poetry reveals this common feature of the Metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century to the fullest degree. In the third stanza of "The Good-Morrow" Donne expresses the unity of love binding him and his beloved by justifying his point with an analogy taken from the older world:

> My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
> And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
> Where can we find two better hemispheres,
> Without sharp norths, without declining west? (Donne 15-18)

And thus he continues his argument by referring to a scholastically philosophical doctrine in stating how things that are not mixed equally are subject to discomposition and decay:

> Whatever dies was not mixed equally;
> If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
> Love so alike that none do slacken, none can die. (Donne 19-21)

The opening stanza of "A Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy's Day, Being the Shortest Day" is another example in this context:

> 'Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,
> Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmasks;
> The sun is spent, and now his flasks
> Send forth light squibs, no constant rays; (Donne 1-4)

St. Lucy's feast day, it is significant to note, was thought to be the shortest day of the year according to the old calendar. Older science manifests itself also in the third and fourth lines of the poem as well as in their continuation:

> The world's whole sap is sunk;
> The general balm the hydroptic earth hath drunk,
> Whither, as to the bed's-feet, life is shrunk,
> Dead and interred; yet all these seem to laugh,
> Compared with me, who am their epitaph. (Donne 5-9)

In "Love's Growth" a similar reference to scholastic philosophy is made. The second stanza of the poem starts as:

> And yet no greater, but more eminent,
> Love by the spring is grown;
> As, in the firmament,
> Stars by the sun are not enlarged, but shown, (Donne 15-19)

Based on Clement's explanatory footnote to the poem, the lines refer "to the phenomenon that as the sun rises and the sky becomes lighter the definite dark background of the sky gradually recedes and the stars thus gradually *seem* larger" (20). In the following lines, "gentle love deeds" "bud out" like the growing appearance of the stars:

> Gentle love deeds, as blossoms in a bough,
> From love's awakened root do bud out now
> If, as in water stirred more circles be
> Produced by one, love such additions take,
> Those, like so many spheres, but one heaven make,
> For they are all concentric unto thee; (Donne 19-24)

Following the analogy between the stars and "gentle love deeds" in the above lines, the reference is made to the Ptolemaic astronomy that considered all the heavenly spheres as concentric to the earth (Clements 21). Many other of Donne's secular and religious poems including "Love's Alchemy" and "Hymn to God, My God in My Sickness" make similar references to the older science. The

influence of scholastic philosophy is also evident in the third stanza for "A Valediction: Of the Book":

> This book, as long-lived as the elements,
> Or as the world's form, this all-graved tome
> In cipher writ, or new-made idiom;
> We for Love's clergy only are instruments,
> When this book is made thus,
> Should again the ravenous
> Vandals and Goths inundate us,
> Learning were safe; in this our universe
> Schools might learn sciences, spheres music, angels verse. (Donne 19-27)

The reference to the elements, the heavenly music of the spheres, and the explicit hint at "schools" in the final line of the stanza, clearly elucidate the impact of ancient philosophy on Donne's poetry.

Rūmi too, quite often addresses the scholastic philosophical trends of his time. Plato and Galen themselves, are in deed, quite frequently referred to in the *Masnavi*:

> Hail, O Love that bringest us good gain—thou that art the
> Physician of all our ills,
> The remedy of our pride and vainglory, our Plato and our Galen!
> (Nicholson 1968, 1:23-24)

Reference to Plato is made in the following lines as well:

You are like Pharaoh, blind and blind-hearted: complaisant
To your enemy and treating the guiltless with ignominy.
How long, O (imitator of) Pharaoh, will you slay the innocent
And pamper your noxious body?
His understanding was superior to that of (other) kings: God's
Ordainment had made him without understanding and blind.
God seals upon the eye and ear of the intelligence makes him
(the intelligent man) an animal, (even) if he is a Plato. (Nicholson 1968, 4: 1920-23)

Moreover, and as discussed by Zarrin-Kūb in different anecdotes throughout the *Maṣnavi,* one is frequently reminded of Plotinus who had argued the beauty of the beloved can be reflected only while she is alive (*The Mystery of the Reed Pipe* 499). Zarrin-Kūb continues how according to Rūmi, beauty dies once the person passes away (*The Mystery of the Reed Pipe* 499). Thus we read in the *Maṣnavi*:

He said this and at the (same) moment went under the earth
(gave up the ghost). The handmaiden was purged of pain and
love,
Because love of the dead is not enduring, because the dead
One is never coming (back) to us; (Nicholson 1968, 1:217-18)

In this connection, Schimmel also writes of how the existence of "Neoplatonic themes in the *Mathnawī* cannot be doubted" (*Mystical Dimensions of Islam* 318). "On the one hand," Schimmel writes, "[Rūmi] was acquainted with Ibn Arabī's teachings through Sadruddīn Qonawī, while on the other,

Hellenistic traditions were always alive in the Near East, particularly in the "country of Romans" (*Rūm*, hence his surname *Rūmī*), Anatolia. Arab scientists and philosophers had carefully preserved the teachings of the Greeks, and even some of Plato's parables found their way into the *Mathnawi*" (*Mystical Dimensions of Islam* 318). In this connection, Bürgel has effectively traced the origin of Rūmi's views on love as Neoplatonic. The writer discusses how the soul, in Rūmi's work, is "inspired to love" by spotting "beauty" that originates from God—"God is beautiful and His beauty manifests itself in earthly phenomena"—which is an idea of essentially Neoplatonic origin ("Ecstasy and Order" 64).

It is significant that the historical circumstances under which Donne was writing, make his poetry unique and certainly very different from Rūmi's. Images reflecting the struggle between the older and the new science inform Donne's poetry throughout. In this regard Grierson writes how Donne is more aware of "disintegration than of comprehensive harmony, of the clash between the older physics and metaphysics on the one hand and the new science of Copernicus and Galileo and Vesalius and Bacon on the other" (2). The fourth stanza of "A Fever" discussing the final destruction of the world, elucidates this point by referring to various philosophical and religious disputes inspired by the older and new science:

> O wrangling schools, that search what fire
> Shall burn this world, had none the wit
> Unto this knowledge to aspire,
> That this her fever might be it? (Donne 13-16)

The clash between older and new science does not inform Rūmi's poetry in any way for obvious reasons. Moreover, Rūmi's harmoniously settled world and ideology had no place for any philosophical or religious contradiction of any kind: all creation and the universe were manifestations of God to him. In other words, in Rūmi's comprehensive and meaningful world, the world is harmonious in all its aspects and with man. Thus we read in the *Maṣnavi*:

> Divine Wisdom created the world in order that all things
> In His Knowledge should be revealed.
> God laid upon the world the throes of parturition for the
> Purpose of making manifest that which He knew.
> You cannot sit inactive for a moment, you cannot rest till
> Some good or evil has issued from you.
> All these cravings for action were ordained to the end that
> Your inward consciousness should come clearly into sight.
> How can the real, which is the body, be at rest when the
> Thread, which is the mind, is pulling it?
> This world and yonder world are incessantly giving birth:
> Every cause is a mother, its effect the child.
> When the effect is born, it too becomes a cause and gives
> Birth to wondrous effects.
> These causes are generation on generation, but it needs a
> Very well lighted eye to see the links in their chain. (Nicholson 1968, 2:994-1001)

The poem clearly reveals the intent behind the creation of the world and its meaningfulness based on a coherent philosophical attitude. According to Nicholson's explanation of the above lines, "God [had] willed that the world, of

which Man is the epitome, should objectify the whole content of His knowledge" (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 111). The logic behind creation is, thus, manifested in "our ceaseless activities [arisen] from the duty of manifesting the Divine consciousness which is the ground of human nature" (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 111).

Furthermore, Husain argues, in regards to the philosophical nature of Donne's writing, how he "was profoundly impressed by the encyclopaedic learning and the keen penetrating and the subtle intellect of St. Thomas Aquinas..." (*The Mystical Element* 37). He continues that "Donne was conversant with the whole field of scholastic philosophy and theology and knew such contemporary schoolmen as Dominicans Victoria, Soto, and Bannes, the last surviving as late as 1604" (*The Mystical Element* 37). In spite of his extensive readings of these theologians and philosophers, however, Donne, according to Husain, never became a follower of the Thomist schools (*The Mystical Element* 37). In fact, his profound familiarity with the works of the Nominalists, especially Duns Scotus brought him closer to the school of such sceptic thinkers as Sextus Empiricus for a short while (*The Mystical Element* 37).

A cursory look at the implicit philosophical conflicts within the devotional work of Donne, will further prove the fact that Donne was not only a mystic of the heart and a preacher by profession, but also a philosopher who was regarded as an authentic voice by many of his own contemporaries. In this connection, Husain writes that "Donne's learning had attracted wide attention and won recognition and respect even in an age of such learned theologians and divines as

Parker, Hooker, and Andrewes" (*The Mystical Element* 37). In the continuation of his discussion, however, Husain reminds his readers of the nature of Donne's philosophical thought by highlighting how his contemporaries characterized his philosophy. According to the critic, Donne's "contemporaries like Ben Jonson, Walton, Carew, and Bishop King, themselves men of learning and taste, did not characterize his thought as essentially medieval or scholastic; his asceticism and saintliness of later years reminded his contemporaries of the piety of the early Fathers of the Church, but his learning or philosophy did not appear to them as medieval" (*The Mystical Element* 37).

At this stage of the discussion, however, it is important to note that the many-sidedness of Donne's philosophy has led some scholars like the renowned critic, T.S. Eliot to announce that philosophy bore no significance at all in Donne's intellectual life and writings. Donne, writes Eliot, "had no philosophy at all, but exactly by having no philosophy he prepared himself within for the new state of mind" (83). Eliot continues his argument by stating: "What is clear is that Donne read a great deal without order or valuation, and that he thought in a spasmodic and fragmentary way when he thought at all. Tradition has really little weight with him; he wishes to read everything, and is willing to take something from everywhere, and is not too nice about coherence" (83).

Donne's writing, however, is among the most complicated of its kind. The finesse of thought, extensive familiarity with the history of the Catholic Church and the philosophical schools as developed throughout the centuries preceding his age have contributed to a general disagreement and confusion about

Donne's religious and philosophical stand. In this connection Husain emphasizes that it is the multi-faceted nature of Donne's thought that has led some critics like T.S. Eliot to call his "erudition 'incorrect' and [to remark] that his poetry expresses no settled belief in anything" (*The Mystical Element* 37). The same intellectual characteristic, Husain believes "has led other critics like Miss Ramsay … to reduce the richness and multiplicity of his philosophical interest to the simplicity of the unquestioning faith of a medievalist" (*The Mystical Element* 37). In order to understand the true nature of Donne's thought, Husain insists on researching the development of his thoughts during the different periods of his intellectual life. In this regard, Husain writes how:

> The legend of Donne's medievalism [arose because of] immense learning, which embraced the whole field of scholastic philosophy, medieval theology, the Hermetic physics, the new science of Copernicus, Galileo and Bacon; and in the words of Donne this 'immoderate desire of human learning and languages' took him to the untrodden and unfamiliar by paths of medieval learning. But though Donne was one of the greatest scholars of his age, the extent of his learning has no doubt been exaggerated by his modern critics, Miss Ramsay, Mrs. Simpson and others. There is no reason to suppose that his learning was greater or more medieval than that of his contemporaries Hooker or Bishop Andrewes. But Donne does express his varied philosophical interests in his poetry and prose. (*The Mystical Element* 38)

Like Donne, Rūmi too was well-read in the philosophy of his time and the period preceding it. Yet neither his poetry nor the critical sources reflect any clash or skepticism within his philosophical views. He had inherited his thoughts from significant philosophers and mystics like Attār, Sanā'i, and Irāqi. This background, however, which was not completely in accord with his intellectual horizons, did not raise any complication in his intellectual life. The historic encounter with Shams, however, put his philosophical thinking evermore in perspective and led him amorously and ever more convinced than before towards his goal of union with Truth.

In comparison and back to our discussion of Donne's peculiar intellectual disposition, it is essential to note the philosophical skepticism that is implicit at the heart of his poetry. In this connection, Husain has effectively categorized the different schools of skepticism and has thus concluded that Donne's skepticism is "of a more philosophical nature than let's say Montaigne's" (*The Mystical Element* 49). Husain has continued his argument by stating how Donne's poetry illustrates an exploration of the different aspects of religious belief without necessarily questioning the Supernatural. He also writes that what differentiates Donne's class of skepticism with that of the Renaissance scholars like Montaigne and Sextus Empiricus is that the latter were serious discreditors of reason and certainty, whereas with Donne reason and certainty were not invalid but still not the best of tools in man's search for the Truth. (*The Mystical Element* 52) Quite contrary "it was the emptiness of skepticism and inadequacy of reason that led him to mysticism" (*The Mystical Element* 59).

In elucidating the nature of Donne's skepticism, Husain highlights the important fact that skepticism "was a passing phase in the development of his religious life and he used it in the body of his poetry as he did the dialectics of the schoolmen and the astronomical concepts of Kepler. The scientific discoveries of his age, like those of Kepler, Copernicus, and Galileo, not only altered his medieval conception of the physical universe, but also undermined 'certainty' in philosophy and helped him to assume a skeptical attitude towards philosophical truth [only] in his early years" (56). The new philosophy, however, according to Husain "did not give rise to skepticism in the original sense of the word, for Donne ever fervently believed in God and recognized the need of religion and the Church...." (57). Continuing his argument, Husain writes how

> It was only after [Donne] had surveyed the whole field of controversial theology that he could give intellectual assent to the Anglican Church, but he soon realized that it was not reason but prayer and meditation that could lead to peace and serenity. This approach is already evident in his Mitcham period, and later expounded in his *Essays in Divinity*. In the several letters addressed to Goodyer from Mitcham he counsels him to be firm in his allegiance to the Anglican church, while he writes in *Pseudo - Martyr* as a confirmed Anglican. He had not only blotted out the impressions of Roman religion but also discovered the essential reasonableness and soundness of the Anglican Church, and at the same time realizes that the Anglican church in matters of continuity of

> tradition, ordination, and the preaching and practice of the true doctrine was also Catholic. (65)

In other words, "Donne realized the need of intellectual conviction, but it was through faith and not reason that he found it. St. Thomas Aquinas had emphasized the power of intellect in the process of 'knowing'..." (Husain 66). Husain elaborates on this point by stating that although "Donne followed St. Thomas Aquinas in his conception of body and soul, he could not give to reason and intellect the supreme place Aquinas had given in his system of philosophy. St. Thomas held that God's existence could be proved by reason, and that our knowledge about Him could be acquired through intellect and reason" (75). In his rejection of the supremacy of reason to believe in God, Donne resembles St. Anselm, moreover, who echoing St. Augustine had stated: "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand" (54).

Husain carries on this argument by stating that "Donne, like the mystics of all ages, believed that the problem of the knowledge of God could not be solved through reason, intellect and philosophy, and that the comprehension of reality could only be attained after a prolonged exercise of "sense and spirit" resulting in illumination. To him, as to all the great Christian mystics, God is Love ..." (76, 77). In this respect, Martz writes of how "All worldly philosophy is vain, for essential truth, says Donne, cannot be learned through sense-impressions of external things, nor through that "Fantasie" which transmits sense-impressions to the intellect. Such philosophy is the way of pride; true knowledge comes only

through humility, [...]" (qtd. in Gardner 167). A cursory look at the two *Anniversaries* again reflects this trend in Donne's thoughts and how he places God and human beings with all their frailties and weaknesses at the two opposite ends of the spectrum. The *First Anniversary* illustrates this point effectively:

> And that, since all faire colour then did sinke,
> Tis now but wicked vanity to thinke,
> To color vitious deeds with good pretence,
> Or with bought colors to allude mens sense. (Donne 373-74)

Moreover in Donne, the knowledge of God is a gift bestowed on certain individuals and no empirical knowledge would be similar in nature to that blessing. The mistrust of learning, logic, and rationality is nowhere more evident than in "The Litany:"

> That learning, thine Ambassador,
> From thine allegiance wee never attempt,
> That beauty, paradises flower
> For physicke made, from poison be exempt,
> That wit, borne apt, high good to doe,
> Be dwelling lazily
> On Natures nothing, be not nothing too,
> That our affections kill us not, nor dye,
> Heare us, weake echoes, O thou eare, and cry. (Donne 235-43)

The unreliability of human knowledge in leading the individual to the Sublime is a characteristic shared by mystics of all religions and Rūmi is not exception in this regard. To Rūmi, however, the conviction that had taken Donne so many years to arrive at, had been evident from the very beginning.

As I already mentioned, however, in spite of the spiritual gifts that accompanied Rūmi ever since childhood, it was the decisive encounter with Shams that further enhanced the belief that the issue of Divine could not be addressed through logic, reason, or worldly philosophy. The period of seclusion with Shams was followed by a different approach to religion and a different perspective in life, culminating in the mystical poetry that expressed his newly discovered thoughts and feelings.

Rūmi's emphasis on the function of the heart in knowing and approaching God was also an echo of the belief of the other masters of Islamic mysticism and what immediately set them apart from theologians and preachers. Rūmi, although quite educated in all the sciences of his time and extensively familiar with philosophy, did not regard logic and philosophy as tools for discovering Truth. The story in the *Maṣnavi* about the group of Indians who had not seen an elephant before and who were trying to find out the shape of the creature is an allegory for Rūmi's rejection of logic and philosophy in attaining Truth. Shems Friendlander in his book *Rūmi: the Hidden Treasure* discusses how Rūmi had taken the story from Sanā'i and carried it forward (35). The story tells us how one day in darkness the Indians approach the elephant, each expressing their opinion about it based on the different body parts of the animal they were feeling. One man, the

story highlights, announces the creature as a pillar as he had touched its leg, while the other sees it as a fan as he had felt its ear. Of course, as Rūmi concludes in the poem each of the individual observations had been correct in relation to a part and not to the elephant as a whole. Allegorically the story hints at the insufficiency of knowledge and approach of philosophers who according to a Sufi "are those who view the Perfection of the Absolute from a limited perspective; so all they see is part of the Absolute, not the Infinite in its entirety" (*In the Tavern of Ruin* 3).

In a similar way the lines form the following ghazal highlight the insufficiency of reason:

> Words coming from within (the soul), veil (do not reveal) the Soul,
> The tongue (expression) (too) veils the gems and the treasures of the coast.
> Use of logic to know God, although an illuminating torch,
> Does still veil the sunlight of Truth. (Furūzānfar 1998, 371, Ghazal 921)

The shortcomings of logic, from Rūmi's perspective, are also seen in the battle with *nafs* ("ego"). Mankind, Rūmi believes, can not depend on worldly philosophy and logic when it comes to the less complicated issue of discarding carnal desires of the ego. The allegorical anecdote below is highly illuminating in this regard:

> To slay this (enemy) is not the work of reason and intelligence:
> the inward lion is not subdued by the hare.

> This canal self (*nafs*) is Hell, and Hell is a dragon (the fire Of) which is not diminished by oceans (of water). (Nicholson 1968, 1: 1374-75)

God is the only answer to the dilemma, here as elsewhere, and as the concluding part of the poem reads:

> To God (alone) belongs this foot (power) to kill it: who, indeed, But God should draw its bow (vanquish it)? (Nicholson 1968, 1: 1383)

The unreliability of human knowledge in the way of leading the individual to the Sublime is a characteristic shared by mystics of all religions, and Rūmi and Donne seem to be no exception in this regard. While one adopts the less orthodox route of dealing with the Divine as a Sufi, the other stresses humbleness and charity as means of eliminating the distance between man and God. Abstinence and good deeds, in this way become the means of bridging Donne and God.

Chapter Three – Religious Obligation and Mystical Transcendence

In any discussion of the mystical nature of a work, the questions of the relationship with God and how the mystic approaches the Divine are inevitable. The way each individual views himself and how he defines his relationship with God, in other words, give the overall shape to one's mystical belief and distinguish him immediately from others. Rūmi and Donne are among the few mystics whose poems encompass the dynamics of the relationship with the Divine to the fullest from various perspectives as will be addressed in this chapter.

Donne's exploration into the religious issues of his time and his personal upbringing led to an exploration of a series of details in his poetry that duly reflect the intricacy of his thoughts, sensitivity, and sentiments. Gardner writes how "[the] young Donne was genuinely religious, if by a religious person we understand a person to whom the idea of God not only is self-evident, but brings with it a sense of absolute obligation" (xvii). This "sense of absolute obligation" followed by the feeling of guilt and the continuous effort to become free of sin, thus find their way in the major portion of Donne's writing and make his religious poetry unique in the endeavor to eschew evil through highly poetic language. "Holy Sonnet II" is quite illuminating in this regard. The sonnet starts with a declaration of possession; Donne's possession by God:

> As due by many titles I resign
> Myself to Thee, O God, first I was made
> By Thee, and for Thee, and when I was decayed
> Thy blood bought that the which before was Thine; (Donne 1-4)

The speaker's readiness in these lines to surrender to God has its roots in the fact that he was made by God and for Him; thus a logical sense of obligation pursues the love of God, making the spiritual quest all the more worthwhile and meaningful. The second stanza follows along the same lines, with the first line highlighting the allegiance of the speaker to God through the Father-son relationship:

> I am Thy son, made with Thyself to shine,
> Thy servant, whose pains thou hast still repaid,
> They sheep, Thine Image, and till I betrayed
> Myself, a temple of Thy Spirit divine; (Donne 5-8)

The sense of obligation and absolute allegiance are notably augmented in the above lines through the Father-son relationship and the fact that the speaker declares being made in the Image of the Divine. Further to the dominant image in this stanza that links it with the one preceding it, is the servant-master relationship alluded to in the second line: 'Thy servant, whose pains thou still hast repaid.' The image of 'sheep' as God's Image brings forth the notions of servitude and obligation to their highest peak in this stanza. Following the sense of surrender to God's love and mercy, the speaker in the poem asks God, one more time to intervene between him and devil, as he is fearful of sin:

> Why doth the devil then usurp on me?
> Why doth he steal, nay ravish that's Thy right?

Except Thou rise and for Thine own work fight,
Oh I shall soon despair, when I do see
That Thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt not choose me,
And Satan hates me, yet is loath to lose me. (Donne 9-14)

In the first four lines of the above piece, constituting the last stanza of the sonnet, the request to be delivered from Satan and sin is made on the basis of the declaration that the speaker considers himself God's "right." The speaker in these line beseeches God to "rise" and "fight" for His ("Thine") "own work," being him. Thus the sense of obligation, as seen in these lines, operates on two levels simultaneously: on one level the speaker genuinely delivers himself to God out of love, and on the other he asks him for deliverance from sin and temptation by Satan. Each of these notions, as clearly seen in these lines, arises out of the speaker's belief that man has been made in the Image of God and bears a close kinship to Him.

For Rūmi, in contrast, and as stated by many of his critics, the sense of obligation when it came to his relationship with the Beloved was totally irrelevant. Sufism is the religion of love and as Javad Nurbakhsh has stated "in the *Qur'an*, Allah proclaims: 'Those who believe have great love for God" (*In the Tavern of Ruin* 23). In this regard, Nurbakhsh cites Rūmi who describes the essence of his religion by saying:

"The way of a lover is not among the religions.
The church and state of lovers is God." (12)

In other words, in Rūmi's mystical opinion and in his religion of love, no obligation to God existed; he was surrounded by love and would not follow Him out of any sense of commitment as he had found himself drowned in the ocean of God's love. The absence of obligation in dealing with the Divine in Rūmi's life, therefore, did not lead to any philosophical doubts or internal conflicts that had to be resolved for Donne due to the nature of his mind and belief system. After the meeting with Shams, Rūmi had been convinced that the path to Truth could only be traveled by love and thus rejected all other possibilities of knowing Him.

Religious obligation and the great passion to be forgiven, as already mentioned, are compelling characteristics of Donne's Divine poetry when compared to Rūmi's, and this sense of commitment explains by itself the absence of vigor in his religious work. The overall jovial tone of Rūmi's poetry is an outcome of a firm belief; a conviction of the purposefulness of life as well as of the poet's certainty about his mission, place, and goal in life. With Donne, everything is dubious as he perpetually struggles to achieve a solid vision in regards to his place in life and in relation to God. This duality in belief informs all layers of his poetry as will be highlighted throughout this argument. Donne, even in his divine poetry, for instance, seems to be caught between the temptations of the material world and the benefits of the other one. His constant oscillations between the two equally compelling poles in his life clearly illustrate an absence of conviction and a void in his motivations as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Donne's strict upbringing at a difficult time in the history of the Catholic Church, his personal disposition and perpetual concern about the issue of human guilt, as well as his pessimism lead to an acute sense of pain in his work. Le Comte's statement that Donne's work was mostly informed by "his interest in science, his skepticism [as well as] his insight as a psychologist" (243) supports [the poet's] sensitivity to this delicate issue. The feeling of guilt, even when not accompanied by the sense of religious failure seems to have never left Donne with the peace of mind so ubiquitous in Rūmi's life and poetry. As further discussed by John Booty, Donne is not necessarily thinking of "the distant sins of his youth" (25) when pondering on the question of guilt in his poetry. The sins are mostly those "still weighing him down, impinging upon his present health, such as, perhaps, his apostasy, the hurt he caused his mother, his lasciviousness, his rampant ambition, and his dragging Ann, his wife, into poverty with him" (Booty 25, 26). Rūmi as already mentioned stands at exactly the opposite end of this spectrum. The eagerness with which Rūmi embraces the world and the complete sense of surrender to God, at the core of his spiritual work immediately sets him apart from Donne in this context.

In regards to the mystical bent of Donne's poetry, Itrat Husain, one of Donne's most celebrated critics, discusses the emphasis laid on the question of quilt and sin in his poetry. Husain thus opens his argument by stating that "John Donne not only [had] outlived the skepticism of his youth but also the rationalistic element in the philosophy of Saint Thomas, and became a mystic" (*The Mystical Element*, 21). The issue of guilt as a prevalent theme is peculiar to Donne's

poetry and immediately differentiates it from the religious writings of other mystics including Rūmi. According to Husain, Donne:

> Tried to approach God through an agonized sense of sin and the realization of the need of purgation and passionate faith-in Christ, as the Saviour. Donne's mysticism, in spite of his interest in philosophy and 'controverted divinity,' is independent of his philosophy; he is mainly interested in the practical, devotional and empirical side of mysticism, the attainment of Illumination, through personal holiness, and the, adoration of Christ, His Passion and Crucifixion. Like St. Bernard he tried to 'recall devout and loving contemplation to the Image of the crucified Christ. (*The Mystical Element* 21)

The first stanza of "A Hymn to Christ, at the Author's Last Going into Germany" clearly elucidates the devotional characteristic of Donne's spiritual poetry. The dominant sense of guilt in these lines, prepares Donne for the mediation of the person of Christ:

> In what torn ship soever I embark,
> That ship shall be my emblem of Thy ark;
> What sea soever swallow me, that flood
> Shall be to me an emblem of Thy blood;
> Though Thou with clouds of anger do disguise
> Thy face, yet through that mask I know those eyes,
> Which, though they turn away sometimes,
> They never will despise. (Donne 1-8)

In spite of the prevalent sense of guilt and sin in the above lines, the speaker in the poem has thorough confidence in the unconditional love of the Savior. In the next stanza, the speaker explicitly goes on to ask for the intervention of Christ:

> I sacrifice this island unto Thee,
> And all whom I loved there, and who loved me;
> When I have put our seas 'twixt them and me,
> Put thou Thy sea betwixt my sins and Thee.
> As the tree's sap doth seek the root below
> In winter, in my winter now I go
> Where none but Thee, the eternal root
> Of true love, I may know. (Donne 9-16)

The true love for Christ and the speaker's unwavering belief in his bounty lead to a peaceful surrender, only "an harmonious soul" can experience:

> Not Thou nor Thy religion dost control
> The amorousness of an harmonious soul,
> But Thou would'st have that love Thyself; as Thou
> Art jealous, Lord, so I am jealous now;
> Thou lov'st not, till from loving more, Thou free
> My soul: whoever gives, takes liberty:
> O, if Thou car'st not whom I love,
> Alas, Thou lov'st not me. (Donne 17-24)

The sense of complete surrender to the love of Christ culminates in the next and final stanza of the poem where the speaker asks to be "divorced" from "those fainter beams of love":

Seal then this bill of my divorce to all
On whom those fainter beams of love did fall;
Marry those which in youth scattered be
On fame, wit, hopes (false mistresses) to Thee.
Churches are best for prayer that have least light:
To see God only, I go out of sight;
And to 'scape stormy days, I choose
An everlasting night. (Donne 25-32)

Thus for the speaker in these final lines of the poem, the "everlasting night" follows the "scattered" experiences of youthful days of "fame, wit, hopes (false mistresses)" and enhances the possibility "To see God only." The mystical nature of these lines, therefore, owes much to the feeling of guilt implicit throughout the poem.

The constant ruminations on the concept of guilt lead the Christian poet to the discussion of sin which, from his perspective, is the greatest hindrance in way of reaching the Divine. Donne is constantly analyzing his moods and thoughts, specifically concentrating on his personal sense of loss as seen in the following lines of the first stanza from "Holy Sonnet XVII":

Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt
To nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her soul early into heaven ravished,
Wholly in heavenly things my mind is set. (Donne 1-4)

The person referred to, in these lines, is clearly his beloved wife, Anne More, who endows Donne the leisure to set his mind "Wholly in heavenly things...."

According to the speaker, the "good" in his life "is dead" since the beloved has "paid her last debt/To nature, and to hers..." By personalizing his loss, the speaker sets the tone for a thorough contemplation of the person of Christ in the second stanza:

> Here the admiring her my mind did whet
> To seek Thee, God; so streams do show the head;
> But though I have found Thee, and Thou my thirst hast fed,
> A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet. (Donne 5-8)

The first line of the second quatrain of the sonnet powerfully draws the connection between the second part of the poem and the lines preceding it: "Here the admiring her my mind did whet" is the line linking the beauty of the mind of the speaker's beloved to God. Yet he is not satisfied and is in search of more:

> But why should I beg more love, when as Thou
> Dost woo my soul, for hers off'ring all Thine:
> And dost not only fear lest I allow
> My love to saints and angels, things divine. (Donne 9-12)

Donne, as seen in the above lines, is fearful of sharing God's love with any "thing." The choice of words in this stanza particularly adds to the personalized sense of affection and love sought by the speaker. Verbs as powerful as "beg," "woo," and "fear" link the last quatrain of the poem to its concluding couplet where again the highly powerful words of "jealousy," and "doubt" enhance the intimate tone:

But in Thy tender jealousy dost doubt
Lest the world, flesh, yea devil put Thee out. (Donne 12-14)

Thus, the proximity with God sought by Donne in these lines operates on a very personal level and immediately differentiates Donne's quest for the Divine from that of his Muslim counterpart. In Rūmi's religion of love, in other words, the dominant image of a sinner beseeching God to be forgiven is not as common. As discussed in the previous chapter, Rūmi is in fact the founder of a particular school of mysticism called *tasavvuf-i āshiqānah* ("loving Sufism") vis-à-vis *tasavvuf-i zāhidānah* ("pious Sufism") which distinguished him from many of his mystic forefathers and contemporaries including Hafiz.

With the elimination of the towering figure of Christ in Christian mysticism in general and Donne's spiritual approach in particular, Rūmi's poetry too shows the issue of ridding the self from sin. He too addresses the issue of sin repeatedly in his poetry but his examination of this question functions on the broader level of all human beings and hence his poetry becomes less personally intensive and passionate than Donne's. The explicit emphasis laid on the practical issues of religion and the focus on the stages of purgation from sin and contemplation prior to the union with the Divine —symbolized differently through the imagery of wine-drinking and drunkenness—bring Rūmi's poetry very close to that of Donne's as seen in the following lines:

I am not one of the wise, so that you can take away (wisdom) from me,

You took away my wisdom, what (else) do you want to take away from me?
By God, I will not buy the heavens even if they were for free
I am poor but I will not become one by owning things.
As I am generous, and drunk with the wine of love,
Give me, O brother, the cup of poverty.
I neither want life, nor wealth
Since then I will die and will not be a monarch (of my soul) anymore.
As you are wise, keep the distance from me,
Beware, keep your distance from me, don't be daring.
And if you are an acquaintance (if you are into the game), you are then my two eyes,
If you would accept me, I would be your slave.
O cupbearer, bring the remaining wine,
As you are beautiful and a well-known one.
You won't be gone because of the cruelty of the drunk,
As your religion's beautiful and as you are not as painful as an arrow's wound. (Furūzānfar 1998, 1153, Ghazal 3113)

The significance thus attached to the pure love of Divine and the separation from worldly occupations, i.e., sin sought by the speaker bridge the epistemological gap between the two poets and unifies the notion of self-perfection as a prerequisite to union with the Divine. The speaker in these lines believes that the only route to supremacy in the world is deliverance from the mundane occupations of the transient life; the same notion highlighted in "A Hymn to Christ, at the Author's Last Going into Germany."

In this connection it should be noted that faith and the belief in religion function differently for each poet. For Donne, religion was mostly a tool to save him from being dissolved in despair, a bridge that would help him cross the tempting ocean of the world without being easily indulged in sin. Rūmi's submission to Islam, though not an informed one—as he was born into a highly religious family—was inspired by full devotion and complete surrender to religion, and it had a mystical bent to it from the very beginning. Nowhere in Rūmi's work can one see him anxious to be forgiven for his sins; his firm belief in the correctness and superiority of his path to that of the nonbelievers, the orthodoxy, and the ignorant was a passport to salvation which did not urge him to hesitate his blessedness at any time.

Clinging to religion as a way to achieve salvation is a theme in Donne's penitential sonnets. In "Holy Sonnet V," for instance, the subject matter is sin as explicitly stated in the first stanza of the poem:

> I am a little world made cunningly
> Of elements and an angelic sprite,
> But black sin hath betrayed to endless night
> My world's both parts, and, oh, both parts must die. (Donne 1-4)

In connection to the subject of sin, the plea to be forgiven by God is the main idea in the second and third stanzas of the poem and culminates in the concluding couplet:

And burn me, O Lord, with a fiery zeal
Of Thee and Thy house, which doth in eating heal. (Donne 13-14)

The speaker in the poem makes it clear what hazardous life human beings can lead when body and soul are equally threatened through the interaction by sin. The mystical character of most of Donne's divine poems, therefore, owes much to the refuge he seeks in religion to be forgiven for his transgressions. In general, moreover, the Holy Sonnets deal with the two concepts of repentance and forgiveness. In the following lines from the first part of "Holy Sonnet III," the speaker is again asking in earnest for forgiveness:

O might those sighs and tears return again
Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
That I might in this holy discontent
Mourn with some fruit, as I have mourned in vain. (Donne 1-4)

Most of the time, however, repentance in Donne's spiritual poetry functions through self-punishment. "The self-punishment," according to Altizer, "occurs most often when the poet consciously attempts to identify himself with the suffering Christ..." (85), as in "Holy Sonnet XI:"

Spit in my face you Jews, and pierce my side,
Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucify me,
For I have sinned, and sinned, and only He
Who could do no iniquity hath died. (Donne 1-4)

The identification with the suffering person of Christ thus adds a mystical character to this category of Donne's divine poetry and immediately distinguishes it from the mystical poetry in the Islamic tradition with no corresponding paradigm informing it.

In regards to the somber atmosphere of Donne's religious work, Ms. Gardner writes how Donne "did not look to religion for an ecstasy of the spirit which would efface the memory of the ecstasy of the flesh; but for an 'evenness' of piety which would preserve him from despair" (*The Divine Poems* xxxvi). Either way, it is interesting to note, religion is a tool in Donne's poetry to bridge him to the Divine. For Rūmi religion and mysticism were not just tools to reach the Divine; for him love of God and religion were the same concept and could be used interchangeably. In his rejection of orthodoxy, Rūmi had become an innovator, a pioneer in the way of seeking a relationship with the Divine. Donne's breech with the Catholic Church, in contrast, had personal and political implications; his motivation was one of bridging the gap between the court and the church.

Christian mysticism, it is important to note, tends by its very nature to focus more on the figure of suffering Christ and uses him as a bridge to reach and seek union with the Divine. In this way, the sacrificial image of Christ is a cornerstone in Donne's religious work. The significant role the image of Christ plays as lover and savior at the same time in Donne's poetry is clearly seen in the following lines from "Holy Sonnet XVI":

Father, part of His double interest
Unto Thy kingdom, Thy son gives to me;
His jointure in the knotty Trinity
He keeps, and gives to me His death's conquest. (Donne 1-4)

These opening lines of the sonnet clearly show the importance attached to Christ as a figure making the union between the speaker of the poem and God possible. In the second stanza, the bridging of man and God through the sacrificial figure becomes more evident:

This lamb, whose death with life the world hath blest,
Was from the world's beginning slain, and He
Hath made two wills, which with the legacy
Of His and Thy kingdom do Thy sons invest. (Donne 5-8)

As implicit in the above lines, the legitimacy of the speaker's mission is also through Christ. The third stanza's explicit reference to 2 Corinthians 3.6—"The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (Patrides 349)—further highlights the role played by Christ in the entire drama of man's salvation:

Yet such are those laws that men argue yet
Whether a man those statutes can fulfill;
None doth; but all-healing grace and Spirit
Revive again what law and letter kill. (Donne 9-12)

The final couplet reaffirms the thesis and God's "last command":

Thy law's abridgment and Thy last command
Is all but love; oh let that last will stand! (Donne 13-14)

The reference in the above lines to John 13.34—"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (Patrides 349)—enhances the significance thus attached to the responsibility of human beings towards each other which can only take place through the mediation of the Son.

In Islamic mysticism too, it should be observed, the figure of the Prophet Mohammad plays a most important role. Sufis of all schools relate their practice to the early Sufi practices at the Prophet's own time and do not hesitate to announce their allegiance to the Prophet. Rūmi goes so far as equating "the perfect human being"[9] to the "Mohammedan Truth"[10] and regards this elevated stage of human perfection as the "ultimate wisdom"[11] (Zarrin-Kūb, *The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 613). The following lines from the *Maṣnavi* summarize the significance attributed to Muhammed:

The *Khutbas*[12] for kings change (and pass), and their empire;
(All will pass) except the empire and *khutbas* (insignia) of the prophets,
Because the pomp of kings is from (earthly) vanity, (while)
The glorious privilege of the prophets is from (Divine) Majesty.
The names of kings are removed from the dirhems, (but)
The name of Ahmad (Mohammed) is stamped on them for ever.

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[9] Insān-i kāmil
[10] Haqiqat-i Muhammadiah
[11] Aql-i Kull
[12] As defined by Nicholson in the footnote to the line, the *khutba* is a "prayer for the Prophet and the reigning sovereign, which forms past of the public worship for Moslems" (62)

> The name of Ahmad is the name of all the prophets: when
> The hundred comes (is counted), ninety is with us as well.
> (Nicholson 1968, 1:1103-06)

Rūmi considers the Prophet as the most perfect of all the prophets although he is the last one of them. The analogy of regarding Muhammed as the number "one hundred" in comparison to all previous prophets as numbers below hundred does not imply, of course, that from Rūmi's perspective they were not embodiments of perfection; Mohammed, however, excelled all prophets in sublimity (Zarrin-Kūb 669). The centrality of the Prophet Mohammed in Islamic theology, as discussed by Schimmel, is clearly revealed in the Koranic verse 61:6 where he is understood "as the *paraklet* who has come to [fulfill] the message of Christ" (*We Believe in One God* 39). In the continuation of the discussion, Schimmel defines the word "perakletos" as "praised" and as "a word that is associated with one of Muhammad's honorific names: Ahmad"[13] (*We Believe in One God* 39). Another analogy in Rūmi, viewing respectively regular human beings and beasts as inferior to prophets and more perfect fellow beings highlights the same idea (Zarrin-Kūb 364):

> That (position which you hold in relation to them) is like
> The stage of animality, which is captive and subject to (the
> Stage of) humanity.

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[13] According to *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, "In the few places where [parakletos] is found in pre-Christian and extra-Christian literature it has for the most part a more general menaing: *one who appears in another's behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper*... In modern literature the [active] sense *helper, intercessor* is suitable in all sense of the word."

> Know that the stage of humanity is subject to the power of
> The saints as the animal (is subject to man), O master.
> Ahmad (Mohammed) in righteousness called (the people of) the
> Whole world his servants: read (the text), "Say, O My servants."
> (Nicholson 1968, 1: 2494-97)

In Sufism, however, this central figure is not an essential or the only means in helping the soul in the search for union with the Divine. This fact, of course, is due to the fact that in Islam the prophet is only a messenger and not an embodiment of God or a mediator between man and God as he is in Christianity. The whole process in Sufism is within the individual; the spiritual experience is thus achieved through the various stages and states he has to pass to reunite with the Source. In Islamic mysticism, the law or *shari'a* sets the regulation and framework for the Sufi's quest, and the way or *tariq'a* becomes the path traveled by the Sufi in this search to reach Truth or *haqiq'a* (Chittick 10).

In this regard Collins has pointed out how the "religious nature ... of all mysticism is determined by the philosophical attitude of the mystic toward the final and ultimate Object in whom the contemplative soul proposes to find Unity and rest apart from the multiplicity and longing of its own inner life" (Collins 1, 2). What makes Donne's mysticism different from that of Rūmi's, then, is his philosophical attitude which is determined by his religious upbringing; as already mentioned, in Christian mysticism the emphasis is laid upon the suffering figure of Christ who functions as a bridge towards salvation and proximity to God. This is a difference that goes back to the two religions and not necessarily to Donne's and Rūmi's different ways of dealing with the Sublime. According to Goring,

"Christian mysticism tends to focus on the person and suffering of Christ, attempting to move beyond image and word to the immediate presence of God" (355). "In contrast with other forms of mysticism," Goring continues, " Christian mystics reject the idea, common in some other religions, of the absorption of the individual into the divine, and retain the distinction between the individual believer and God" (355) and this is a theme in the Holy Sonnets that will be discussed shortly. The first stanza of "Holy Sonnet II" explicitly shows the line drawn between man and God even in the most intense moments of proximity:

> As due by many titles I resign
> Myself to Thee, O God, first I was made
> By Thee, and for Thee, and when I was decayed
> Thy blood bought that the which before was Thine; (Donne 1-4)

In spite of the assertion of possession to God in these lines, mankind even in his most refined stages, sees a distance between himself and the Source. The Father-son relationship in the next stanza of the poem hints at the separation of identity, despite the closeness that is being highlighted in the poem:

> I am Thy son, made with Thyself to shine,
> Thy servant, whose pains thou hast still repaid,
> Thy sheep, Thine Image, and, till I betrayed
> Myself, a temple of Thy Spirit divine. (Donne 5-8)

The distinction between man and God, as seen in the above lines, is enforced through metaphors of "servant," "Image," and "temple" of the "Spirit divine."

As a significant component of Donne's religious belief, the suffering person of Christ functions as a bridge between man and God in the same way he used religion in general as a tool for forgiveness and salvation. Donne is constantly aware of his sins and it is precisely this acknowledgement of mistakes and the image of a soul burdened with guilt and doubts, culminating in pleas for salvation, that give rise to the mystical bent of his poetry. He constantly beseeches Christ and wants him to be the mediator between him and God to be forgiven as seen in the opening lines of "Holy Sonnet XIV":

> Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You
> As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
> That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
> Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new. (Donne 1-4)

The plea to be pardoned and born anew and free of sins is through the "three-personed" God who needs to "o'erthrow" the speaker in the poem in order for him to "rise and stand." In the next four lines the speaker explains how "reason" that is God's "viceroy" in man can not defend him as it is "captived"—to Satan—or else it is "weak or untrue":

> I, like an usurped town, to another due,
> Labor to admit you, but Oh, to no end!
> Reason, Your viceroy in me, me should defend,
> But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue. (Donne 5-8)

The subject matter in the above lines is reinforced in the next stanza of the poem, with the analogy of being linked with the devil through marriage. The same idea is explored in the last two lines of the final stanza through the metaphor of imprisonment. The concluding couplet combines the analogies of marriage and imprisonment through one of the most intricate paradoxes in English literature:

> Yet dearly I love You, and would be loved fain,
> But am betrothed unto Your enemy:
> Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
> Take me to You, imprison me, for I,
> Except You enthrall me, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me. (Donne 9-14)

In close connection to the subject of guilt and the intermediary role of Christ is the concept of 'grace' in Donne's poetry. "Donne" writes Husain, "not only distrusted the power of intellect as an absolute entity not liable to error, but he also believed that faith came not through intellectual conviction but through the working of grace" (90).

In regards to the place the notion of grace has in Donne's poetry, Shaw has focused on the impact the poet thought the concept had upon his religious vocation. Shaw thus writes that in "the sermons and in Donne's later poems, we see the knots of the 'holy Sonnets' gradually untied. In the sonnets, Donne at times seems almost pharisaic in his demands of a personal sign to establish his faith. These demands were never met; God did not rend the heavens and come down. Donne entered the ministry not at the direct instance of the voice of God

but in yielding, finally, to the urgings of King James. But the faith which he has developed in the course of his duties allows him later to interpret the King's initiative as providential. Dropping his insistence upon direct revelation, Donne comes to stress the use God makes of his chosen vessels in relaying the call to others" (56).

In Islam too, it is interesting to note, 'grace' has an undeniably delicate place in the sphere of faith and salvation as a whole. The Islamic concept of grace is explicit in the general belief already mentioned that although all "of the prophets are manifestations of the Divine Unity and Perfection, ... Mohammed is its supreme manifestation. His name is the most exalted of the Divine Names, containing all the Names within it. Thus, Mohammed is the spiritual incarnation and manifestation of all of God's names" (Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* 8, 9). Nurbakhsh quotes the Prophet himself as saying: "what God first created was my Light" and also alludes to the Mohammedan comment that "I was a prophet while Adam was still between water and earth" (Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* 8, 9).

Grace is also a gift endowed to saints[14] in Islam. Prophets share the stature of sainthood with chosen individuals like the first *Shiate* leader, Ali whom the Prophet had stated was made out of the same Light he was made[15] (Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* 8, 9). And Ali himself states how spiritually he had been with all the prophets (Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* 8, 9).

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[14] Wali. The word literally means "sincere friend" as translated by Nurbakhsh (9).
[15] "Ali and I are of the same Light" is the exact quotation.

Following the spiritual leaders[16] in dissension are the Sufi masters who have adopted the esoteric path of Ali (Nurbakhsh, *In the Tavern of Ruin* 8, 9).

Both Rūmi and Donne, however, like many other mystics, believed that to be the recipient of God's grace, the individual must possess certain unique qualities. As highlighted by Husain, "Donne thought that grace does not come so much from 'without' as it grows out of 'God's graces' that are in us; and like a true mystic he went further, and declared that grace and faith, though superior to reason and natural faculties of the soul, are inferior to the vision of God, which is the final aim of the human quest for God" (*The Mystical Element* 91).

One more time what differentiates the belief in the concept of grace in both poets is the intermittent existence of Christ for Donne and Christ's role in bringing grace to him. As Husain quotes him, he does utter that "I am that Christian man, who has seen this affliction in the cause thereof, so far off, as in my sin in Adam, and the remedy of this affliction, so far off, as in the death of Christ Jesus, I am the man, that cannot repine nor murmur, since I am the cause; I am the man that cannot despair, since Christ is the remedy" (qtd. in *The Mystical Element* 99). The quotation highly qualifies the intermediary role of Christ in connection to the notion of grace in eventually helping Donne in his quest for salvation.

Rūmi, on the other hand, does not set a criterion of eligibility to receive God's grace. Here again the heart and the love of God are the only determining factors in the field and no intermediary figure needs to be present for an individual to be blessed and become the recipient of grace at the same time.

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[16] Imams

It is, however, important to note that in regards to the role of Christ, rather than God, in bringing Donne salvation and in qualifying him as one of the recipients of grace, he seems to belong to the school of Christian mystics that in comparison to others acknowledge a higher allegiance to the Savior. In this way, the image of Christ becomes the only means of connecting to the Divine. Husain's discussion of the role thus given to Christ in Donne's mystical belief is highly illuminating. He states how "[…]the mystic contemplation of Donne is based on the mystical conception of Christology; in fact, like St. Paul and St. Augustine and the other great Christian mystics, Donne believed that all knowledge was to "know Christ" and all virtue was to be Christ-like" (*The Mystical Element* 103). This passionate devotion to the Person of Christ, therefore, becomes a keynote in Donne's mysticism (*The Mystical Element* 104). Husain further argues that "Donne belongs to that line of Christian mystics who, like St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, and others have made the adoration of Christ and the contemplation of His Passion the aim of their mystical life, while St. Thomas belongs to the school of Dionysius, the Areopagite, who while recognizing the significance of Christ makes God Himself the central object of the mystic's life" (*The Mystical Element* 105). It is, therefore, highly evident how mysticism and its relationship to the image of respective prophets in Christianity and Islam are different in Rūmi and Donne. Based on the dichotomy drawn by Husain in the above lines, Rūmi's mystical system, is much closer in essence to the mysticism of St. Thomas rather than to

those of St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross, whom Donne so extensively pays homage to in his poetry.

Closely connected to the concept of grace in devotional poetry and integral to any epistemological discussion of mysticism are the issues of the release from the self, ego, or *nafs* and the transcendence of time and space by the individual. In Rūmi's entire work, as well as in some of Donne's most intense moments in the *Holy Sonnets,* the transcendence of the self and the journey to a world where time and space are no longer existent are evident.

Yet again the process of the dissolution of the self and the achievement of a mystic consciousness operate differently in the mystical world of the two poets as will be discussed shortly. What makes the journey to the transcendental world doubly interesting, moreover, is again the dialectics of the process even within Donne's mystical vocation. At times in the

> Holy Sonnets if there is any spiritual-imaginative progression ..., it involves a slight shift away from attempts to grasp the divine by coming to terms with its paradoxes, and towards an expanded sense of the otherness of God, accompanied by a partial awareness that the first step of bridging the gap must be self-depreciation—experiencing the impotence and the insignificance of one's own "red soule" in comparison to the overwhelming force of God's mysterious love for mankind. (Altizer 88)

At other times and earlier throughout his poetry, however, the question of attaining personal conviction of an intellectual kind tends to gain supremacy over the notion of "the release from the self" as a fundamental principle in all mystical works in general. In other words, Donne is seen in his poems to be preoccupied by the attempt to free himself from the complications he saw as inherent in both Catholicism and Anglicanism. It seems that in such moments the mystical notion of selflessness dissolves into the more pressing idiosyncratic issue of his time in both the realms of politics and religion. As stated by Gardner,"[t]he struggles and conflicts to which the Divine Poems witness did not lead to the secret heights and depths of the contemplative life, but to the public life of duty and charity which Walton describes" (*The Divine Poems* xxxvi).

Regardless of these inconsistencies in Donne in this context as elsewhere, it is significant to note that in both the Islamic and Christian traditions of mysticism, the transcendence of the ego is a prerequisite to reach the final stage. We also saw that at the earlier stages of Donne's spiritual process, the battle with ego was secondary to his religiopolitical thoughts. Yet in the later years of his religious career, Donne became as intensively occupied with this issue as Rūmi, for instance, was from the very beginning of his mystical conviction. The process of the dissolution of the self, however, functions differently in different religions. As Zaehner has written in this connection, in the religion of the Vedas, for instance "[the] Vedāntin experience[...] is one of absolute identity with Brahman" (33). In Christianity, he continues "the individual is united or 'oned' with God" (33) and this is the exact experience a Muslim mystic experiences. Yet common

between Hindu, Christian, or Muslim mysticism, it is interesting to note, is the "concentration on ultimate reality to the complete exclusion of all else; and by 'all else' is meant the phenomenal world or, as the theists put it, all that is not God" (33). In spite of this fundamental commonality between Christian and Islamic mysticism, one sees in Donne's spiritual poetry the absence of the desire for actual proximity with the Beloved the way Rūmi describes it through the allegorical stories of the *Maṣnavi*. Donne's religious poetry, in other words, can hardly be categorized as mystical in the sense that the works of Rūmi, Hafiz, and even Donne's own contemporary, George Herbert, are considered to be mystical. Donne's mystical preoccupation is mainly a desire for proximity with the Savior; he is at the same time concerned with his own salvation as he is constantly trying to find a way out of the dilemma of the religious controversy of his time.

For Rūmi, in contrast, if not throughout his entire life, at least after the decisive encounter with Shams, things had fallen into their respective places. He was so drowned in the ocean of God's love he could barely think of anything else including himself, his life, and his sins. In this respect Rūmi is even different from the majority of his contemporary Persian Sufi poets. It is highly important to know that the first historical stage in Sufism, according to one of Rūmi's contemporary critics, Abdul-Karim Soroush, is *tasavvuf-i zāhidānah*[17] (33) as introduced earlier in this chapter. In his book, *Qumār-i Āshiqānah*, Soroush defines this school of mysticism as one mainly inspired by the fear of God (33). Abū Hāmid Muhammed Qazzāli, according to the critic, is the greatest representative of the school (33). Soroush compares the man-God relationship

[17] Pious mysticism

from Abū Hāmid's perspective to a deer that finds itself in front of a bloodthirsty lion (33). Rūmi and Ahmad Ghazāli—brother to Hāmid—are the first two mystics credited with having juxtaposed love and Sufism, however. Although Ahmad had thoroughly embraced the tenet of Sufism based on love, his book, *Savānih* did not achieve the popularity Rūmi's work received in blending love and Sufism together[18] (Soroush 34). Rūmi is surrounded by the Love of God; he cannot see any one but Him; yet, as mentioned before, this is a feature that through comparison can hardly be seen in Donne. In this connection and in an article of comparative nature, Eric Schroeder places Donne and Hafiz side by side and defines Hafiz's work as "passionate and voluptuous" (216). Schroeder continues by stating both Hafiz and Donne had blended the erotic and the metaphysical languages in the search for the Divine, yet the latter, he believes "had drunk and sang the wine of the grape and hungered and thirsted after the flesh" (216). The main reason I am referring to this article on Hafiz is because through comparison this aspect of his poetry is considered a defining characteristic of Rūmi's as well. Schroeder further states that Hafiz had most probably been "increasingly possessed by the need of an absolute relationship with God, and that sexual desire, insatiable as it is, and drunkenness, in which bliss a sense of insight does actually expel the impious cares of reason, were perhaps always and without doubt increasingly types of religious experience, for him as for other Sufis" (216).

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[18] Other contemporaries of Rūmi, who had similarly introduced love into Sufism are the Egyptian Ibn-i Fāriz, and Irāqi in Iran. Following Rūmi, there were Al'ā al-Dulah Simnāni, Hafiz , Abdul Rahmān Jāmi,and Kasīri who had dealt with Sufism from a similar perspective. Rūmi is, however, considered the most important figure in the field, as his approach of placing *tasavvuf-i ā'shiqānah* vis-à-vis *tasavvuf-i khufi* was quite revolutionary (Soroush 34).

In Persian mysticism, drunkenness symbolizes the ecstasy in which all sense of self seems to vanish; drunkenness thus highlights the concentration on an "ultimate reality to the complete exclusion of all else" as described by Zaehner. References to wine, the cup, the cupbearer abound in the poetry of Rūmi and all other Persian mystic poets. Hence we read in the lines taken from a sonnet from the *Divan:*

> When evening comes and steals my cup, I will say to it, 'Give
> (it) back, for my evening hath not come.'"
> Hence the Arabs applied the name *mudām* [continuous] to wine,
> Because the wine-drinker is never sated.
> Love makes the wine of realization to bubble: He is the cup-bearer
> To the *siddíq* (true lover) in secret. (Nicholson 1968, 3: 4740-42)

In his insightful work *The Sufi Path of Love* on Rūmi, William Chittick has differentiated three kinds of wine besides its symbolic meaning to describe "the joys and ecstasies of union [with God]" (311). Chittick defines wine as a drink that intoxicates and argues, furthermore, that besides "the kind made from grapes there are also sensuality, which brings about blindness and removes him who drinks it from God's favor; and Love, which tears away the veils separating man from God and brings about union" (311). The following lines from the *Maṣnavi* allude to the third type of love quite often used in both works:

> God gives to a draught of wine such (potency) that one
> intoxicated with it escapes from the two worlds.

He hath endowed hashish with the property that, for a time,
It delivers him (who eats it) from self-consciousness.
God makes sleep to be (constituted) in such a manner that it
Erases (all) thought of the tow worlds.
He made Majnun, through love for a (dog's) skin, to be such
That he would not know an enemy from a friend.
He hath a hundred thousand wines of this sort which He sets
(in auditory) over thy (intellectual) perceptions.
For the carnal soul there are the wines of damnation, which
Carry that ill-starred one out of the (right) way.
For the intellect there are the wines of felicity, so that it gains
The abode whence is no departure. (Nicholson 1968, 4: 2683-89)

Through analogy, the above piece sheds more light on the issues highlighted in Chittick's discussion about the various types of intoxication. In this regard, Kabir Helminski has effectively elaborated on the practical value of "drunkenness" by stating that the key to the "drunkenness advocated by Rūmi and other Sufis lies in understanding the educational and transformational process of Sufism" (10). Helminski thus continues that "'The tavern of Ruin' is the Sufi *dergah* in which this education is carried out. In the ideal of the dergah, seekers came to lose the passions of the self and to experience the ecstasy of selflessness. This education was in every respect a dismantling of the false self"(10). In Donne's poetry, in contrast, no such sense of the dissolution of the self can be seen. Put briefly, mysticism as a paradigm where the self and the Sublime unite to the exclusion of everything else is a state barely seen in the divine poetry of John Donne.

Of the concrete manifestations of the dissolution of self into Divine is the distance created between individual and his immediate surroundings. The subject-object and cause and effect relationships, in other words, no longer function in the mystical experience as they do under ordinary circumstances. Basically, Rūmi's own life-style and his total disregard for worldly issues, as well as almost all of the allegorical stories in the *Masnavi* and most of the sonnets in the *Divan,* are indicative of this basic tenet of his mysticism. Symbolically the inverted microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship between man and the world referred to in his poetry reminds us of the question in point:

> FROM the pure star-bright souls replenishment is ever
> Coming to the stars of heaven.
> Outwardly we are ruled by these stars, but our inward
> Nature has become the ruler of the skies.
> Therefore, while in form thou are the microcosm, in reality
> Thou art the macrocosm.
> Externally the branch is the origin of the fruit, intrinsically
> The branch came into existence for the sake of the fruit.
> Had there been no hope of the fruit, would the gardener
> Have planted the tree?
> Therefore in reality the tree is born of the fruit, though it
> Appears to be produced by the tree. (Nicholson 1968, 4: 519-24)

Man is, therefore, distanced from the world as seen in the above lines. As Nicholson writes in *Rūmi: Poet and Mystic*, "[according} to Sufis, Man, though he may be regarded as a microcosm, is not a mere epitome of the universe: on the

contrary, he is its origin and final cause, since it was brought into existence for his sake, and essentially the Perfect Man is the spirit of Divine Revelation through whom the whole purpose of creation is fulfilled" (124).

Contrariwise, Donne's mysticism does not involve this type of distance from his surroundings. Though quite familiar with most of the Christian mystics and their practices he is not seen to be submerged anywhere in his works into the sea of the Absolute. In his most religious poems, he begs, he pleads, and cries to be forgiven because of his sins but he never dissolves into the sea. In this connection, moreover, his biographers report that he sought patronage throughout his life. As one can read in many of his poems he is undeniably deeply concerned with the problem of overvaluing the world, a topic fundamentally absent in Rūmi's spiritual work. In the following lines, for example, one can see how Donne is voicing his concern for falling prey to this world's temptations. The opening lines of "Holy Sonnet III" thus prepare us for the confession of sins to be stated later in the poem:

> O might those sighes and teares returne againe
> Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
> That I might in this holy discontent
> Mourne with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine; (Donne 1-4)

The next group of lines, focuses on the acceptance of guilt through attention paid to the mundane as explicitly referred to as "idolatry" in the following lines:

In mine Idolatry what showres of raine
Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart did rent?
That sufferance was my sinne I now repent,
'Cause I did suffer I must suffer paine. (Donne 5-8)

Thus the speaker in the poem feels justified to experience pain as he had suffered for the wrong worldly causes. The different sinful attractions are listed in the third quatrain followed by another paradox, unique in its kind in linking the "cause" and "effect" and "sinne" and "punishment" as the speaker's inevitable dilemma:

Th'hydroptique drunkard, and night-scouting thiefe,
The itchy Lecher, and selfe tickling proud
Have the remembrance of past joyes, for reliefe,
Of coming ills. To (poore) me is allow'd
No ease; for, long, yet vehement griefe hath beene
Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne. (Donne 9-14)

As expected from Donne's analytical mind and skeptical disposition, the sense of guilt for overvaluing the world is juxtaposed with frustration originating for the contempt he feels for it. *The First Anniversary* thoroughly brings the point further into focus. The following lines from the poem are exemplary in this respect primarily by way of dealing with the "impossibility of health" in this world:

There is no health; physitians say that we
At best, enjoy, but a neutralitee.
And can there be worse sicknesse, then to know
That we are never well, nor can be so? (Donne 91-94)

The same idea is highlighted when "the shortness of life" is in question:

And yet we doe not do that; we are not men:
There is not now that mankinde, which was then
When as the Sunne, and man, did seeme to strive,
(Joynt tenants of the world) who should survive.
When Stag, and Raven, and the long-liv'd tree,
Compar'd with man, dy'de in minoritee.
When, if a slow-pac'd starre had stolne away
From the observers marking, he might stay
Two or three hundred yeares to see't againe,
And them make up his observation plaine;
When, as the age was long, the sise was great: (Donne 111-21)

Based on the above lines and the explanation given by Patrides, the lines "voice the widespread belief that men were once far longer lived and taller" (252). The belief, however, is defied from the speaker's perspective as stated in the opening of this part of the poem.

Among the poems addressing this subject some are more personal and spontaneous. "The Litany" belongs to this category of poems:

From needing danger, to bee good,
From owing thee yesterdaies teares to day,

From trusting so much to thy blood,
That in that hope, wee wound our soule away,
From bribing thee with Almes, to excuse
Some sinne more burdenous,
From light affecting, in religion, newes,
From thinking us all soule, neglecting thus
Our mutuall duties, Lord deliver us. (Donne 136-44)

The poem is certainly along the lines of purgation from sins and ridding oneself from worldly concerns which link it quite well with the concept of sin. The poet's concern seems to be delivered more from the contempt of the world than from overvaluing it. This is undeniably a mystical characteristic bringing, one more time, the two mystics together. In the following poem from the *Masnavi*, for example, the contempt for the world is highlighted through an analogy likening the material world to the life of an embryo:

If any one were to say to the embryo in the womb, "Outside
Is a world exceedingly well-ordered,
.....
Its marvels come not into (are beyond) description: why art
Thou in tribulation in this darkness?
(Why) dost thou drink blood in the gibbet of this narrow place
(the womb) in the midst of confinement and filth and pain?"—
it (the embryo), in virtue of its present state, would be incredulous, and would turn away from this message and would disbelieve it,
Saying "This is absurd and is a deceit and delusion," because
The judgment of the blind has no imagination. (Nicholson 1968, 3: 53, 58-62)

In spite of the overt note of contempt for the material world in the poems discussed in this context, it is noteworthy, that both poets are of the general opinion that the earth is not as gloomy a place as it at times seems to be. At the end of the "The Litany," for instance, Donne concludes that happiness may exist in courts, and that the earth is not our prison:

> From being anxious, or secure,
> Dead clods of sadnesse, or light squibs of mirth,
> From thinking, that great courts immure
> All, or no happinesse, or that this earth
> Is only for our prison fram'd,
> Or that thou art covetous
> To them thou lovest, or that they are maim'd
> From reaching this worlds sweet, who seek thee thus,
> With all their might; Good Lord deliver us. (Donne 127-35)

In a similar way the *Second Anniversary* concludes with a reassuring note undermining the meaninglessness of the world and the sense of vacuum expressed in the *First Anniversary* that have led to categorizing Donne as one of the most despondent poets in the Christian tradition. The *Second Anniversary*, thus, highlights the conviction that through repentance and abstinence from the joys of this life mankind can be liberated from pain and reach the Divine:

> Think that thou hearst thy knell, and think no more,
> But that, as Bels cal'd thee to Church before,
> So this, to the Triumphant Church, cals [sic] thee.

Thinke Satan's Sergeants round about thee bee,
And thinke that but for Legacies they thrust;
Give one thy Pride, to'another give thy Lust:
Given them those sinnes which they gave thee before,
And trust th'immaculate blood to wash thy score. (Donne 99-106)

The poem, however, changes its direction towards the end as Donne is far too much a man of the world to give up. Donne's dilemma here as in the majority of his poems seems more than anything else to be the internal conflict between his interest in life and his love of religion. Like his struggle with the legitimacy of earthly love and the inevitability of death, the resignation from the allure and fascination of this world does not come to Donne as naturally and effortlessly as it came to Rūmi. His naturally skeptical mind tends to scrutinize every aspect of his belief.

Similarly the following lines reflect the optimism so ubiquitous in the *Maṣnavi*:

When beams of Wisdom strike in soils and
Clays
Receptive to the seed, Earth keeps her trust:
In springtime all deposits she repays,
Taught be eternal Justice to be just.
O Thou whose Grace informs the witless clod,
Whose Wrath makes blind the heart and eye
Within,
My praise dispraises Thee, Almighty God;
For praise is being, and to be is sin. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 508-09)

Of the other significant topics in this discussion is the importance attached to Satan in introducing man to sin and temptation and in interfering the process of detachment from the world. In this regard Zarrin-Kūb discusses how *Masnavi* reflects the Koranic verses where Adam accepts responsibility in having committed transgression as opposed to Iblis who attributed his sin to God as the originator and creator of the entire world (*The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 639). Implicitly the lines below highlight this detrimental interference:

> As soon as he escaped from bewilderment, he returned into
> the (right) road; (then) he saw that the thief had carried off
> the wares from the shop.
> He cried, '*O Lord, we have done wrong*,' and 'Alas,' that is
> To say, 'darkness came and the way was lost.'
> This Divine destiny is a cloud that covers the sun: thereby
> Lions and dragons become as mice. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 1253-55)

The subject of Satan's interference is doubly significant due to its impact on counterfeiting the desire for union with the Divine. In this regard Zaehner states that "Both the Catholic Church and the Sufis have always believed and still believe in the Devil and his ability to counterfeit mystical states" (43). Hence we read in the story of "Iblis and Mu'awiya" a variation of the belief and how the Devil was trying to mislead Mu'awiya:

> 'Tis related in Tradition that Mu'awiya was asleep in a nook
> of the palace.
> The palace-door was fastened from the inside, for he was

Fatigued by people's visits.
Suddenly he was awakened by a man, (but) when he opened
His eyes the man vanished.
He said (to himself), "No one had entrance to the palace:
Who is he that has shown such impudence and boldness?"
Then he went round and searched in order to find the trace
Of that one who had become hidden (from sight).
Behind the door he espied a luckless man who was hiding his
Face in the door and curtain.
"Hey," he cried, "who are you? What is your name?" "(To
speak) plainly," said he, "my name is Iblis the damned."
He (Mu'awiya) asked, "Why did you take pains to awaken
Me? Tell the truth, don't tell me what is reverse and contrary
(to the fact)." (Nicholson 1968, 2:2604-12)

"Truth" and its "reverse" through Iblis's manipulation, thus become the subject matter of the entire piece only the introduction of which has been cited above. It should be mentioned, however, that the evil originating from Devil in Rūmi's work, is a moral one and certainly not a philosophical kind (Zarrin-Kūb, *The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 579). The Devil in *Paradise Lost,* to cite an example from the other end of the spectrum, rebels against God and speaks of hate and malice for Him. In spite of his rebellious nature, the Devil in the *Maṣnavi* talks of love and surrender to God and does not hesitate to plead guilty to God in the end (Zarrin-Kūb, *The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 579).

The deceitfulness of the Devil in the *Maṣnavi,* therefore, is only a means of counterfeiting the Truth. The Devil in Donne has more or less a function

similar. The couplet concluding "Holy Sonnet VI" illustrates this point effectively:

> Impute me righteous, thus purged of evil,
> For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devil. (Donne 13-14)

In the first two lines of the third stanza of "Holy Sonnet II" when the speaker asks about the right of the devil to steal away the right entitled to God, the reader is reminded of the same argument:

> Why doth the devil then usurp on me?
> Why doth he steal, nay ravish that's Thy right? (Donne 9-10)

And again in "Holy Sonnet XV" we read a ramification of the same conviction in Donne:

> And as a robbed man which by search doth find
> His stol'n stuff sold must lose or buy it again,
> The son of glory came down, and was slain,
> Us whom He had made, and Satan stol'n, to unbind. (Donne 9-12)

All of the above cited poems reveal the role given to the Devil to counterfeit reality and create a distance between man and God.

Despite all the complications discussed so far in way of reaching the Divine, God may be approached depending on how the individual views him. As already mentioned, in his insistence on the power of the heart and love to gain

proximity to God and on his emphasis on the merciful side of the Deity, Rūmi's approach to mysticism is unsurpassed. In this regard, he resembles the Christian mystics who tend to maintain a distance between themselves and God's avenger side. Yet the similarity between Rūmi and Christian mystics does not bring him close to Donne as the latter in his constant state of anxiety and pleading, brings more to the mind the fearful God of the Old Testament. Zaehner's words shed the clarifying light on the controversy between Islamic and Christian mysticism in regards to the double-sidedness of God's face. He thus writes that

> The Muslim mystics believe human psyche is subject to more or less violent oscillations between extremes, especially when it lays itself open to both supernatural and praeternatural visitations by following a methodical ascetic training. In Islam these states are reflected in God Himself who is both *Al-Rahmān*, 'the compassionate', and *Al-Qahhār*, 'the Avenger'. The contrast between the two poles of the Deity is far more marked in Islam than it is in Christianity. The latter is at present content with the divine mercy and the divine justice, and prefers to draw a veil over the anger of God which figures so prominently in the Old Testament. (Zaehner 84-5)

It is precisely at this point that this argument assumes its turn and Donne's mystical language and Rūmi's poetic expression become widely different, in

sharply opposite ways. Rūmi's poetry—and in contrast to his Sufi predecessors—predominantly shows "the compassionate" side of God; "the Avenger" aspect of the Creator is barely ever alluded to in his poetry, as both the stories and the *ghazals* reveal. In Donne's work, again contrary to Zaehner's observation and in contrast to mainstream Christianity, a continuous state of anxiety and fear not particularly over the anger of God, however, but about His unavailability to hear the poet and forgive his sins, is predominant. "Holy sonnet IX" thus begins by asking a question that undermines the entire concept of divine justice:

> If poisonous minerals, and if that tree
> Whose fruit threw death on else immortal us,
> If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
> Cannot be damned, alas, why should I be? (Donne 1-4)

The speaker's helplessness is further voiced in the second stanza where he claims "intent" and "reason," both faculties placed within human beings by God, are responsible for his sins:

> Why should intent or reason, born in me,
> Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous?
> And mercy being easy, and glorious
> To God, in His stern wrath why threatens He? (Donne 5-8)

Based on the above exemplary piece, Donne's God, therefore, is most often the strict Hebrew God of Righteousness as also seen in the concluding quatrain and couplet of "Holy Sonnet XIX":

I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today
In prayers and flattering speeches I court God;
Tomorrow I quake with true fear of His rod.
So my devout firs come and go away
Like a fantastic ague: save that here
Those are my best days when I shake with fear. (Donne 9-14)

The second stanza in "Holy Sonnet VI" explores the same idea; as the speaker of the poem feels the impending threat of death, he expresses a concern of another type:

And gluttonous death will instantly unjoint
My body and soul, and I shall sleep a space,
But my ever-waking part shall see that face
Whose fear already shakes my every joint: (Donne 5-8)

Intermittently, of course, the loving and caring face of God is alluded to, as in "Holy Sonnet II." The opening lines of the sonnet elucidate the allegiance of the speaker to God:

As due by many titles I resign
Myself to Thee, O God, first I was made
By Thee, and for Thee, and when I was decayed
Thy blood bought that the which before was Thine. (Donne 1-4)

As the poem continues, further closeness to the caring creator is enhanced through images of soft servitude discussed earlier in this chapter.

On the other hand, it should be noted that Rūmi comes from a tradition where God's anger, if not equally but at least repeatedly, is alluded to. He, nevertheless, barely ever allows himself to be concerned with an avenging Creator. For him God has only one face; he is the eternal source of love and compassion:

> God hath placed a ladder before us: we must climb it,
> Step by step.
> You have feet: why pretend to be lame? You have hands:
> Freewill is the endeavour to thank God for His Beneficence;
> Your necessitarianism denies the Beneficence.
> Thanksgiving for the power of acting freely gives you more
> Power to thank Him; necessitarianism takes away what
> God hath given.
> The brigands are on the road: do not sleep until you see
> The gate and the threshold!
> If you put trust in God, trust Him with your work! Sow
> The seed, then rely upon the Almighty! (Nicholson 1968, 1:929-33)

The sense of gratitude and thankfulness for God's bounty and benevolence is a common theme in Rūmi and contributes to the core of his amorous Sufi poetry.

Centered around the teachings of both religious and mystical traditions is the issue of the mortification of flesh. Both Rūmi and Donne do not hesitate to remind themselves and their audience of the transitory state of the lives of human beings on earth and the inevitable mortification of flesh. Rūmi, of course, views

sickness and death as realities essentially originating from God. Throughout the *Masnavi* he repeatedly highlights the fact that injuries and illnesses are only instruments of death as we read in the conversation between the angel of death (*Azrael*) and God in the lines below:

> God said, "(I swear) by My resplendent knowledge, I will
> make thee the executioner of these (My) creatures."
> He replied, "O Lord, Thy creatures will regard me as their
> enemy when I strangle them at death.
> Dost Thou deem it right, O exalted Lord, to make me hated
> And like a foe in appearance?"
> He (God) said, "I will bring into clear view certain causes,
> (such as) fever and dysentery and phrenitis and spear(-wounds);
> For (so) I will turn their attention form thee to the diseases
> And threefold causes (of death)." (Nicholson 1968, 5:1694-99)

As the anecdote proceeds, God tells Azrael, that even *he* is an instrument of death compared to Himself, who is the cause of all phenomena in life and afterlife:

> God said, "He who perceives the origin (does not regard the
> Derivative): how, then, should he be conscious of thy intervention?
> Although thou hast concealed thyself (thy real nature) from
> The vulgar, still to the clear-eyed (mystics) thou art (no more
> than) a veil (instrument)." (Nicholson 1968, 5: 1710-12)

From Rūmi's perspective death opens the gates of prison towards freedom and in a sense becomes the beginning of true life, as highlighted by Dashti (122). The following lines from the *Maṣnavi* further elucidate this point of view:

> A certain man saying, "The world would be delightful,
> Were it not for the intervention of death."
> The other said, "If there were no death, the tangled world
> Would not be worth a straw… (Nicholson 1968, 5: 1760-62)

Inevitable as death is, according to these lines, the speaker of the poem does acknowledge the transient nature of life and its meaninglessness compared to true life. According to Dashti, Rūmi considers death merely as a change in the surface of things; to him man's essence is an everlasting gem that will remain untainted by the touch of death (124). Donne, however, deals with the issue of the mortification of flesh in a more explicit manner. The sense of surrender to the inevitable as seen in Rūmi is absent in Donne as seen in the following lines:

> Oh my black soul! now thou art summoned
> By sickness, death's herald, and champion;
> Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
> Treason, and durst not turn to whence he is fled, (Donne 1-4)

The above stanza constituting the opening quatrain of "Holy Sonnet IV" is a reminder of the temporary nature of mankind's life and the ultimate vulnerability of the body to death.

The predominance of death even when not explicitly referred to is the subject matter of many of Donne's poems as seen in "A Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies Day":

> `Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,
> Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmasks;
> The sun is spent, and now his flasks
> Send forth light squibs, no constant rays;
> The world's whole sap is sunk;
> The general balm the hydroptic earth hath drunk,
> Whither, as to the bed's feet, life is shrunk,
> Dead and interred; yet all these seem to laugh,
> Compared with me, who am their epitaph. (Donne 1-9)

The theme of death is augmented in the above lines through images of the sun sending forth "light squibs" and "no constant rays" at a time when the "world's whole sap is sunk" and "the hydroptic earth" has drunk "the general balm." The speaker thus concludes that "life is shrunk" under the circumstances; above all, however, he announces himself dead as well and so the "epitaph" of all the named dead phenomena in the stanza.

Moreover, and as seen in the following lines from "Love's Exchange," love and death are inseparable in Donne's verse because he recognizes them as the two forces which lay greatest claims to the body:

> For this, Love is enraged with me,
> Yet kills not. If I must example be

To future rebels, if the unborn
Must learn by my being cut up and torn,
Kill, and dissect me, Love; for this
Torture against thine own end is:
Racked carcasses make ill anatomies. (Donne 36-42)

The vulnerability of the speaker to external forces in the above lines is revealed not only in relation to love, but also to death; interestingly enough both forces function along the same lines. In fact death, according to the above lines, facilitates the annihilating mission of love.

The juxtaposition of love and death and their destructive power are, of course, nowhere as explicit as in "The Blossom"

Little think'st thou, poor flower,
Whom I have watched six or seven days,
And seen thy birth, and seen what every hour
Gave to thy growth, thee to this height to raise,
And now dost laugh and triumph on this bough,
Little think'st thou
That it will freeze anon, and that I shall
Tomorrow find thee fal'n, or not at all. (Donne 1-8)

Death, as implied at, in these lines, through the impending approach of winter will eventually intercept the flower's state of happiness to the extent that "tomorrow" it will either be "fal'n" or "not at all." In a similar way, the heart is prey to the power of love in the stanza following the above:

Little think'st thou, poor heart,
That labor'st yet to nestle thee,
And think'st by hovering here to get a part
In a forbidden or forbidding tree,
And hop'st her stiffness by long siege to bow,
Little think'st thou
That thou tomorrow, ere that Sun doth wake,
Must with this sun and me a journey take. (Donne 9-16)

Yet Donne's attitude towards the inevitability of death is different from that of Rūmi's. He responds to death in the similar emotional way he deals with love. As Robert B. Shaw has observed, "Donne's typical response to the thought of death is one of anxiety – an anxiety so powerful that it emerges even as the poet is denying its presence. Donne's most famous sonnet, "Holy Sonnet X" is a poem whose eloquence is one born of protesting overmuch" (26). In fact, the poem's assuring tone that death should not be considered as intimidating as it sounds is denied throughout the sonnet by images of impermanence, destruction, and sickness:

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell. (Donne 10-11)

Despite the fact that death is announced a "slave" to "chance, kings" and even "desperate men" it still has the efficient tools of "poison, war, and sickness" to dominate over man's body. Death, will eventually die in the end, but its power over man's body cannot be argued against:

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die. (Donne 13-14)

Donne's naturally dialectical mind cannot lead to an unrestrained acceptance of death as an inevitable phenomenon. Like his response to all other issues in life, the confrontation with death here shows a process of complex nature. Similar to all other aspects of Donne's belief, one sees him here as well at pains to accept or effortlessly to believe in the mortification of the flesh. His naturally philosophical mind tends to scrutinize all aspects of his religious upbringing including this controversial issue.

For Rūmi, once again, the issue of the mortification of the flesh—like all other tenets of his belief—was understood and accepted effortlessly from the beginning and led to no complications. His surrender to death reflects his submission to its legitimate power in the same way he had accepted impermanence as one of the prerogatives of earthly love:

He who deems death to be lovely as Joseph gives up his
Soul in ransom for it; he who deems it to be like the wolf
Turns back from the path of salvation.
Every one's death is of the same quality as himself, my lad:
To the enemy of God an enemy, to the friend of God a
friend.
In the eyes of the Turcoman the mirror is fair; in the eyes
Of the Ethiopian it is dark as an Ethiopian.
Your fear of death is really fear of yourself: see what it is
From which you are fleeing!

`Tis your won ugly face, not the visage of Death: your
spirit is like the tree, and death like the leaf. (Nicholson 1968, 3: 3438-42)

As seen in the above lines, Rūmi's religious views in regards to the legitimacy of death, in contrast to Donne's is a matter of deep mystical conviction.

Closely related to the concept of mortification of the flesh is the notion of the mutability of love. Donne highlights this theme in his poems mostly through metaphors of infidelity and inconsistency in relationships as seen in "Song." Faithlessness in love is only one of the manifestations of this attitude and thus becomes the subject matter of the first stanza of the poem:

If thou be'st born to strange sights,
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
Till age snow white hairs on thee,
Thou, when thou return'st, will tell me
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And swear
Nowhere
Lives a woman true, and fair. (Donne 10-19)

The dissatisfaction with the mutability of love, of course, finds its peak in "The Indifferent" where Donne goes so far as to announce that the lover's fidelity is an infidelity to the lovers' religion of love. In the first stanza the speaker simply lists the different kinds of women he would have the possibility to know:

I can love both fair and brown,
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays,
Her who loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays,
Her whom the country formed, and whom the town,
Her who believes, and her who tries,
Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,
And her who is dry cork, and never cries;
I can love her, and her, and you, and you,
I can love any, so she be not true. (Donne 1-9)

The concluding two lines of the first stanza succinctly expand the subject matter that is further developed in the second stanza:

Will no other vice content you?
Will it not serve your turn to do as did your mothers?
Or have you all old vices spent, and now would find out others?
Or doth a fear, that men are true, torment you?
Oh we are not, be not you so;
Let me, and do you, twenty know.
Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go.
Must I, who came to travail through you,
Grow your fixed subject, because you are true? (Donne 10-18)

The mutability of love and the change of interest in the beloved, based on the above lines, extend from the beloved to the lover who has started to strongly share the opinion with her. The final stanza of the poem wraps up the argument by another delicate paradox at the end of it:

Venus heard me sigh this song,
And by love's sweetest part, variety, she swore
She heard not this till now; and that it should be so no more.
She went, examined, and returned ere long,
And said, "Alas, some two or three
Poor heretics in love there be,
Which think to `stablish dangerous constancy.
But I have told them, 'Since you will be true,
You shall be true to them who are false to you.'" (Donne 19-27)

Venus herself is said to be an advocate of "love's sweetest part", i.e., "variety" based on the final stanza of the poem. "Constancy," the epistemologically opposite state of "mutability," therefore, is the prerogative of only a few "poor heretics" who want to "remain true" by practicing the "dangerous" game.

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" explores the same theme in a non-sarcastic, sincere tone. As the speaker of the poem is preparing to leave his beloved, he thus pleads with her to stay calm as "absence," another metaphor for impermanence and the transient nature of love should only be a concern for "dull sublunary lovers":

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we, by a love so much refined
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss. (Donne 13-21)

The dissatisfaction with earthly love due to its impermanence and mutability often gives way to an unbalanced and unrestrained treatment of women as scapegoats who bear the sting of his frustration with the limitations of earthly love. This cynical attitude of Donne's marks a sharp contrast between him and Rūmi, not only in the fundamentals of their mystical belief but also in the general question of the sincerity of their tones. In "Love's Diet" Donne speaks of how his love has turned into "a cumbersome unwieldiness and burdenous corpulence." In order to "make it less, and keep it in proportion" he thus, gives it "a diet." The second and third stanzas of the poem which depict in detail the dynamics of "the diet" embody the sarcastic tone of the speaker in regards to women and their deceitful natures:

> Above one sigh a day I allowed him not,
> Of which my fortune and my faults had part;
> And if sometimes by stealth he got
> A she-sigh from my mistress' heart,
> And thought to feast in that, I let him see
> 'Twas neither very sound, nor meant to me.
>
> If he wrung from me a tear, I brined it so
> With scorn or shame, that him it nourished not;
> If he sucked hers, I let him know,
> 'Twas not a tear which he had got,
> His drink was counterfeit, as was his meat;
> For eyes which roll towards all, weep not, but sweat. (Donne 7-18)

As already seen, however, and in contrast to Donne's perspective on the matter, Rūmi's ever-compassionate, loving attitude towards all members of the human race including women is ubiquitous throughout his poetry. The dissatisfaction with mutability of love in Rūmi, in other words, is dealt with again in a less personal, passionate manner so typical of Donne.

Rūmi, in other words, does not in any place show this intensity of feeling and passion and his poetry barely ever manifests the subtlety and sophistication of thought so peculiar to Donne's work. When it comes to the expression of the base value of mankind's life, Rūmi basically has the entire human race in mind and his object of disapproval is not necessarily his own life. He, unlike Donne, moreover, is not an analyst of his own personal moods and feelings. One can hardly ever identify the speaker and the poet in Rūmi's work as the same person, whereas with Donne the association between the two is most of the time inevitable. In this connection, Grierson states, how "thought in [Donne's] poetry is not his primary concern but the feeling" (12).

Thus the concept of mutability of love assumes a slightly different shape in Rūmi as seen in the story of the king and the handmaiden he had fallen in love with. After buying the maiden and bringing her to the castle, the king in the story finds the maiden's health deteriorating by the day. Finally an enlightened one finds out the cause of the maiden's malady and tells the king how she is in love with a certain merchant whom she cannot see anymore. The king, following the advice of the holy man brings the merchant to the court and unites him and the maiden in marriage based on the man's advice. Later he poisons him and as his

health starts to deteriorate and as he becomes pale and ugly, the maiden falls out of love with him. Thus Rūmi concludes in the closing lines of the poem:

> Since he became ugly and ill-favoured and sallow-cheeked,
> Little by little he became cold (irksome and unpleasing) in her heart.
> Those loves which are for the sake of colour (outward beauty) are not love: in the end they are a disgrace.
> Would that he too had been disgrace (deformity) altogether,
> So that that evil judgment might not have come to pass upon Him! (Nicholson 1968, 1: 204-05)

The transient nature of earthly love is shown in the above mentioned story through the false love between the maiden and the merchant. The true love the king had for her allegorically refers to divine love as highlighted in the following lines of the poem:

> Because love of the dead is not enduring, because the dead
> One is never coming (back) to us;
> (But) love of the living is every moment fresher than a bud in the spirit and in the sight.
> Choose the love of that Living One who is everlasting, who
> Gives thee to drink the wine that increases life. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 217-19)

As discussed earlier, the different poems and anecdotes cited as examples of the two poets' perspectives on the mutability of love, although not compatible in all aspects, share the common characteristic of disbelief in the durability of

love in its earthly form. A strong motif linking the two poets in this discussion is their mutual insistence on the unreliability of earthly or profane love if not changed into divine. It is implicit in the works of both poets that earthly love should not be allowed to grow since it denies lovers the opportunity for growth and change.

As will be discussed shortly, the dialectics of the desire for permanent growth and the attractions in the opposite direction result in Donne in a self-divided persona. This issue again centers around the poet's profound ambivalence toward the notion of the permanence of love, which is a non-existent question on Rūmi's mind, who could make the link between the impermanence and expedience of earthly love at the same time as a helpful means of reaching the Sublime.

In Donne, it should be noted, the concern for the mutability of love reflects itself also in a quest for permanent attachment that is metaphorically dealt with in such ambivalent poems as the "Relic" where we see an objectification of the lovers' bodies in the exploration of the Divine. The poem thus opens with the quest:

> When my grave is broke up again
> Some second guest to entertain
> (For graves have learned that woman-head,
> to be to more than one a bed)
> And he that digs it spies
> A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,
> Will he not let us alone,

And think that there a loving couple lies,
Who thought that this device might be some way
To make their souls, at the last busy day,
Meet at this grave, and make a little stay? (The Relic 1-11)

The desire for attachment culminates in the second stanza of the poem where the pair of lovers would be announced miracles if once discovered:

All women shall adore us, and some men;
And, since at such time miracles are sought,
I would have that age by this paper taught
What miracles we harmless lovers sought. (Donne 19-22)

And again earthly love leads to divine as the speaker denies any fleshly attraction between himself and the beloved:

First, we loved well and faithfully
Yet knew not what we loved, nor why;
Difference of sex no more we knew,
Than our guardian angels do;
Coming and going, we
Perchance might kiss, but not between those meals;
Our hands ne'er touched the seals
Which nature, injured by late law, sets free. (Donne 23-30)

The religious notion of the mortification of flesh leads both poets to express a fascination with (transcendent) sensuality in which the spirit can be awakened when the flesh is aroused. I have placed the adjective "transcendent" within parenthesis mainly on the grounds that the allegorical nature of the poetry

of Rūmi and other Persian Sufi poets shows how these poets regard the non-transcendental or earthly sensuality as a bridge helping the Sufi in gaining Union with the Beloved. For Donne, however, and as alluded to in many of his poems and best described in pieces like "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" and of course, "The Ecstasy" in the *Songs and Sonets*, flesh reminds him foremost of his own mortality and the limits of physical love.

This controversy embodying the division between sacred and profane love results in a self-divided persona in Donne's poetry.[19] In contrast to the view expressed towards the middle of poems like "The Ecstasy," poems like "Elegy VIII: The Comparison" celebrate vulgar eroticism which suggest a base level of existence yet to be transcended:

> As the sweet sweat of Roses in a Still,
> As that which from chaf'd muskats pores doth trill,
> As the Almighty Balme of th'early East,
> Such are the sweat drops of my Mistris breast,
> And on her necke her skin such luster sets,
> They seeme no sweat drops, but pearle coronets. (Donne 1-7)

The description of the "Mistris" leads to more erotic lines towards the end of the poem:

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[19]Love as a central theme in the work of both poets is discussed separately in the fifth chapter of this dissertation. The analysis that follows, although similar in subject at certain junctures, is completely distinct from that discussion as the focus of chapter five is the treatment of love as an allegory.

And like a bunch of ragged carrets stand
The short swolne fingers of thy gouty hand,
Then like the Chymicks masculine equall fire,
Which in the Lymbecks warme wombe doth inspire
Into th'earths worthlesse part a soule of gold,
Such cherishing heat her best lov'ed part doth hold. (Donne 33-39)

It is essential to note, however, that Donne is primarily a devout Catholic and only secondarily a poet. Catholicism and the question of religion in general are Donne's main intellectual preoccupations. In this connection one should note that there is always a fight "between the secular, the 'man of the world' temper of his mind and the claims of a pious and ascetic calling" as stated by Grierson (11). The conflict arising from the two fundamentally different perspectives in poems like "Elegy VIII: The Comparison" and "The Ecstasy" highlights the duality within the poet's mind which was only clarified at the last periods of his poetic career:

But on, alas, so long, so far
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They're ours, though they're not we, we are
The intelligences, they the sphere.

We owe them thanks because they thus
Did us to us at first convey,
Yielded their forces, sense, to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay. ("The Ecstasy" 49-56)

The speaker in the above lines thus announces that earthly love is not compatible with the love existing between the souls of the pair of lovers. The dilemma, however, is not resolved at this point since Donne's pair of lovers decide that in order to achieve transcendent love, they must first be acquainted with its earthly counterpart; a conviction reached at with much difficulty, and in no way comparable with Rūmi's naturally accepted views on the subject. The poem thus reads:

As our blood labors to beget
Spirits as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot which makes us man

So must pure lovers' souls descend
To affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies.

To our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love revealed may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.

And if some lover, such as we,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still mark us, he shall see
Small change, when we're to bodies gone. (Donne 61-76)

The above lines primarily justify the "turn" to "bodies" despite all their incapacities, faculties, and limitations.

A great number of Donne's spiritual work also reveals this battle. The opening lines of "Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward" are clear instances of this duality:

> Let man's soul be a sphere, and then, in this,
> The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
> And as the other spheres, by being grown,
> Subject to foreign motions, lose their own,
> And being by others hurried every day,
> Scarce in a year their natural form obey,
> Pleasure of business, so our souls admit
> For their first mover, and are whirled by it. (Donne 1-9)

The attraction of the mundane is once again the subject matter in these lines. The speaker takes refuge in God's mercy from the worldly attachments and thus states in the concluding lines of the poem:

> O think me worth Thine anger, punish me,
> Burn off my rusts and my deformity,
> Restore Thine image so much, by Thy grace,
> That Thou may'st know me, and I'll turn my face. (Donne 39-42)

The conflict of the flesh and the spirit is perhaps emblematic after deep conflicts of the age. Robert Jackson has noted how in the Reformation-Renaissance:

> The divide between the sacred and secular which creates the contrast … is one important mode of the over-all situation. Cavalier and Puritan, church and state, man and God, sin and salvation, the one and the many, body and soul, art and nature, intellect and emotion, are a few more of the well-known variants. Others of somewhat different and perhaps less familiar type are the pairs male and female, you and me, here and there, now and then, inner and outer, speaker and hearer…The duality of past and present was perhaps the most fundamental. (*John Donne's Christian Vocation* 14-15)

Even a cursory look at Donne's spiritual work reflects the tensions highlighted by Jackson.

Further to Jackson's discussion of the topic, T.S. Eliot's explanation of Donne's views on "the flesh" is quite illuminating. Eliot writes how he wishes "to indicate that the chaotic intellectual background of Donne issues in a compromise with the flesh, rather than an acceptance of the flesh, and in exactly a *contraction* of the field of experience" (119-120). In this connection, Grierson also writes how "Donne's treatment of love is unconventional" as he could not reconcile the contradictory forces within his mind (12). He continues his argument by stating that the "central theme of his poetry is ever his own intense personal moods, as a lover, a friend, an analyst of his own experiences worldly and religious. His philosophy cannot unify these experiences"(12). Later in his

discussion, Grierson reminds his readers of how Donne is the first Anglo – Catholic poet, intensely personal and religious who all the time expressed "not the mind simply of the Christian as such, but the conflicts and longings of one troubled soul, one subtle and fantastic mind" (12).

In addressing the dichotomy between earthly and divine love, it is noteworthy that Donne, if not steadily throughout his career, but at least at certain significant points of it, subscribed to the Neoplatonic concept that allows a fundamental distinction between spiritual and profane love. This general trend in Donne, is a characteristic shared by many poets following Dante. For Dante, as for Donne, Beatrice is a real woman with physical as well as spiritual attributes. The perpetual conflict, therefore between divine and mundane love in a similar way constitutes the backbone of both Dante's and Donne's poetry. The poetry of both as a result of this culminates in images as diverse as war and love, cold and heat, and freedom and servitude.

Love for Donne as well as for his European predecessor is a dualism that baffles the lover and tears his feelings in two. In this context, Robert Ellrodt discusses how Donne and his contemporaries were highly influenced by the Christian belief in the dual nature—divine and human—of Christ (187). In his profound discussion of the interconnectedness of spirit and matter, Ellrodt effectively argues how Christ's "bifold nature" is a constant source of deliberation in the relationship between body and soul as well as the "paradox of Incarnation" in Donne's poetry (187). In this regard it should be stated, however, that the figure of Elizabeth Drury in *The Anniversaries* is slightly different from other

poets' beloveds since for Donne she also becomes a mediator between man and God and a mirror in which the speaker can view himself at the same time (Meakin 204).

Moreover, Donne's work reveals the adaptation of the platonic dialectic, when he explores the thesis that if lovers are divine, their heavenly feelings cannot be expressed in human, earthly language. Ramifications of this belief are shown in "Twickenham Garden" where the mandrake groans when cut from its origin:

> 'Twere wholesomer for me, that winter did
> Benight the glory of this place,
> And that a grave frost did forbid
> These trees to laugh, and mock me to my face;
> But that I may not this disgrace
> Endure, nor leave this garden, Love, let me
> Some senseless piece of this place be;
> Make me a mandrake, so I may groan here,
> Or a stone fountain weeping out my year. (Donne 10-18)

This Platonic influence is seen in Rūmi too. The opening lines of the *Maṣnavi* seem to be an echo of the theme in "Twickenham Garden":

> Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separation—
> Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my
> Lament hath caused man and woman to moan. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 1-2)

As extensively discussed by Christoph Bürgel as well, Rūmi explicitly states in various places throughout the *Masnavi* how it is impossible to express divine feelings in human language and poetry.

"The Undertaking" is another poem in Donne highlighting the incompatibility between the two worlds. The poem, of course, juxtaposes true love and its "ordinary" counterpart and thus becomes almost synonymous with the equalization of it with the Sublime:

> But he who loveliness within
> Hath found, all outward loathes,
> For he who color loves, and skin,
> Loves but their oldest clothes.
>
> If, as I have, you also do
> Virtue attired in woman see,
> And dare love that, and say so too,
> And forget the He and She,
>
> And if this love, though placed so,
> Form profane men you hide,
> Which will no faith on this bestow,
> Or, if they do, deride:
>
> Then you have done a braver thing
> Than all the worthies did.
> And a braver thence will spring
> Which is, to keep that hid. (Donne 13-28)

Donne, as clearly seen in these lines believes that the material world does not deserve the poet's attention in any way. The poem clearly places earthly love in a position beneath Divine love. This superior position can be logically reached at from the characteristics of the lower stages, i.e. earthly love as the occupation of ordinary lovers. From here one can deduce that true, Platonic love, not dealing with mutability and impermanence, requires a different kind of lovers as it is sacred and divine.

Interestingly enough, the following lines from one of Rūmi's most well-known poems, although not explicitly dealing with the dichotomy between divine and earthly love, deal with the different levels of being and hence incorporate the division:

> I died as mineral and became a plant,
> I died as plant and rose to animal,
> I died as animal and I was Man.
> Why should I fear? When was I less by Dying?
> Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
> With angels blest; but even from angelhood
> I must pass on: *all except God doth perish.*
> When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
> I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
> Oh, let me not exist! For Non-existence
> Proclaims in organ tones. "To him we shall
> Return." (Nicholson 1968, 3: 3901-05)

The emphasis on the borders between classes of creatures in the world, as reflected in the above lines, is a medieval thought also reflected in Donne. "A

Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day," according to E. M.W. Tillyard best exemplifies this point (82). The speaker in the poem, Tillyard highlights, considers himself the "quintessence of the primordial nothing out of which God [had] made the world: he shares in no type of earthly existence" (82):

> Were I a man, that I were one
> I needs must know; I should prefer,
> If I were any beast,
> Some ends, some means; yea plants, yea stones detest,
> And love. (30-34)

In the discussion of the possible interrelatedness of the two worlds in Donne's poetry, Husain is one of the many critics who believe that for Donne like Aquinas the two were intertwined (73). Husain elaborates on this point by stating that

> [Donne] will not accept the antithesis between soul and body. The dignity of the body is hardly less than that of the soul.... In the highest spiritual life, as in the fullest and most perfect love, body and soul are complementary, are merged in each other; and after death the life of the soul is in the same measure incomplete, the end for which it was created is not obtained until it is reunited to the body. (74)

As Harold Bloom also writes in this connection,

> [Among] English poets who underwent the influence of Italian love poetry of the Renaissance, John Donne stands out as one who sought to reconcile the errant soul to its body once more. This meant rescuing human love from both the angelic mysticism and the erotic formalism of the Italian tradition and restoring it to its proper domain: humanity. Donne was primarily concerned neither with the angle nor with the beast, but rather with the battlefield separating them, long since vacated by the Italians; insofar as he defended that middle ground in the question of human love, his poetry marked a return to a more 'medieval' sensibility. (12)

The fact that sacred love may have its roots in the profane is a concept that helps bring the Christian poet to his Moslem counterpart. In "The Ecstasy" and "The Good-Morrow" the poet argues how physical union facilitates a spiritual awakening. In "The Good-Morrow" Donne effectively argues how earthly love can substantiate into divine:

> And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
> Which watch not one another out of fear;
> For love, all love of other sights controls,
> And makes one little room an everywhere. (Donne 8-12)

Despite the traceable evidences explored by his critics, some modern readers have tried to justify the duality inherent in Donne's work through

explaining it with the mentality of the modern man. Nutt is only one of the critics who have approached Donne in this manner. He thus writes of how

> Donne's poetry has, in the past, been the object of censorious editors and critics. The simple truth that he wrote a large number of poems dedicated to the worldly experience of men pursuing women, yet as many entirely set on the divine, has frustrated and annoyed many earlier readers who frequently ignored one or the other in their confusion. We live in a less censorious age, but the dichotomy is one the twentieth century has been every bit as eager to demolish. It is not hard for us, in our post-Freudwinian [sic] heaven, to see that a man can write about love and God, and indeed seek both. Yet the tradition still persists that, in some odd way, the John Donne who wrote the love poetry had to become a different, chastened individual for him to write the divine poetry. His ordination is already neatly in place to act as the perfect explanation, as though after it he somehow became, not only obsessed with eschatological thought (concern for the fate of one's soul) but celibate into the bargain. (116)

Any such criticism of Donne would not be correct as his work by its very nature and evolution evades such simplistic analysis. Donne, in other words, was well

aware of the ambiguities concerning earthly love and nothing can better reflect his inner conflict than his poetry.

Similarly, it should be stated again, that Rūmi is one of the forerunners of "taṣavvuf-i āshiqānah" and as highlighted by Dariush Ashuri, his erotic poetry is ambivalent in thus implicitly legitimizing earthly pleasures as a bridge towards the union with the Divine (180). In this regard, it is highly significant to note that in Persian Sufi poetry erotic images and symbols are not mechanically imposed on the works. As discussed by Leonard Lewisohn the "archetypal symbolism of Sufi poetry arises out of a practical, psychologically documented spiritual discipline (*sulük*): it is not derived from purely personal emotions" (*Beyond Faith and Infidelity* 180). In the continuation of his discussion, Lewisohn quotes T. Izutsu who has similarly argued that "the frequent use of metaphors in metaphysics, is one of the characteristic marks of Islamic philosophy ... It must not be taken as a poetic ornament" (*Beyond Faith and Infidelity* 180). Relevant to this discussion is the comparison made with the English Metaphysical poets by Lewisohn in the same discussion. The critic effectively highlights the similarly forceful and integral use of erotic figurative devices "by both medieval European poets such as Dante and the seventeenth-century English metaphysical poets" (*Beyond Faith and Infidelity* 180).

The wholesomeness of things according to Rūmi is due to the attraction that exists between the particles an object or an entity is made of (Zarrin-Kūb, *The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 493). In a similar way, Zarrin-Kūb discusses how from Rūmi's point of view, it is the attraction between opposite forces or poles in every

object that would account for its wholesomeness (*The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 493). The following lines from *Maṣnavi* are highly exemplary in this respect:

> God put desire in man and woman in order that the world
> Should be preserved by this union.
> He also implants the desire in every part for another part:
> From the union of both an act or regeneration results.
> Likewise night and day are in mutual embrace: (they are)
> Different in appearance, but (are really) in agreement.
> Day and night, outwardly, are two contraries and enemies,
> But they both attend on one truth—
> Each desiring the other, like kinsfolk, for the sake of perfecting
> Their action and work.
> (Both serve one purpose) because, without night, the nature
> (of man) would receive no income: what, then, should the days
> expand? (Nicholson 1968, 3: 4415-20)

The whole attraction and beauty in the world is thus due to the love that exists between the elemental particles in the world. Despite the power love has in holding everything together in life, however, the role of intellect cannot be dismissed altogether in Rūmi's poetry as the corresponding discussion in the next chapter will elucidate.

Chapter Four – The Intellectual Character of their Work and its Manifestation therein

Of the distinguishing characteristics of the devotional poetry of both Donne and Rūmi is the intellectual basis of their work and the way it informs all layers of their poetry. As will be seen throughout this analysis, this characteristic—through the different approach each poet takes— in a very delicate manner sets both mystic poets apart not only from each other but also from others who had had the same inclination toward exploring the Divine.

As seen in the previous chapters mystical and philosophical concepts are of utmost significance in the work of both Rūmi and Donne. Their work, nevertheless, reveals a profound involvement with diverse non-religious concepts mostly in relation to the nature of man's consciousness and its interaction with the world as well. In a similar way, the poetry of both illustrates a profound engagement with the question of blind faith vis-à-vis enlightened religious conviction.

In accordance with the dominant atmosphere of the time and the characteristics of the Metaphysical school of poetry, and despite the fact that he dismisses logic as a tool in reaching the Divine, Donne takes immense pleasure in deliberation and deep thinking. He, according to Grierson, is a passionate thinker (3). The two *Anniversaries* explicitly highlight the deeply intellectual bent of Donne's mind. The subject of *The First Anniversary* is Elizabeth Drury, a sixteen year old whom Donne barely knew. Donne had been severely criticized by his critics for having raised profane ideas in the poem. His response that in the poem

he had merely celebrated the idea of a woman and not any particular person is in accordance with the broader questions he raises about mankind and his dilemma on earth in general:

> Where is this mankind now? Who lives to age,
> Fit to be made *Methusalem* his page?
> Alas, we scarse love long enough to trie
> Whether a new made clocke runne right, or lie.
> Old Grandsires talke of yesterday with sorrow,
> And for our children we reserve to morrow.
> So short is life, that every peasant strives,
> In a torne house, or field, to have three lives. (Donne 127-34)

The brevity of life discussed in these lines is juxtaposed with similar topics as the "impossibility of health," "sickness of the world," "decay in nature," disformity of its parts," "disorder in the world," and "weakness in the want of correspondence of heaven and earth" throughout the poem (Patrides 251-261). The concluding part of the poem, rounding up its subject is of a similar intellectual intensity:

> But as in cutting up a man that's dead,
> The body will not last out to have read
> On every part, and therefore men direct
> Their speech to parts, that are of most effect;
> So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
> Were punctuall in this Anatomy. (Donne 436-41)

The disintegration of the body alluded to in these lines is along the same lines explored throughout the poem and is also a justification for the lack of details in the work, as the speaker tells us. *The Second Anniversary,* deals in a similar way with intellectual topics, although in a more optimistic manner. Subjects discussed in the poem range from the "just disestimation of this world," "contemplation of our state in our death-bed," "incommodities of the soul in the body," "Elizabeth's liberty by death," "her ignorance in this life and knowledge in the next," "our company in the life and in the next," "essential joy in this life and in the next," and "accidental joys in both places" (Patrides 271-85). The questions of man's birth, life on earth, suffering, happiness, death, and the issue of afterlife are all thoroughly explored in the two poems and place them among the most intellectually dense poems written in the English language.

In comparison, Rūmi, although an intellectual, is not as meticulous a thinker. In his poetry he can at most give rise to moral, religious, and sometimes philosophical discussions and elaborate on them through citing different anecdotes and stories. As Zarrin-Kūb has noted, Rūmi like many other Sufis would not encourage enquiring about the delicate question of creation and its complexities (*The Mystery of the Reed Pipe* 407). In this regard, Javad Nurbakhsh has emphasized the unreliability of intellect in knowing Reality. He first defines the term 'intellect' as "'particular intellect' (*aql-e jozwi)*" and continues that in a more fundamental manner the term refers "to the 'reasoning intellect' (*aql-e estedlali*), which serve as the foundation for theosophers and materialist philosophers" (*The Psychology of Sufism* 11). "The intellect" continues

Nurbakhsh, "is incapable of knowing Reality for it is constantly changing its views, rejecting each day what it posited the day before" (*The Psychology of Sufism* 11). In one of the stories in the *Masnavi*, Moses asks God why he would destroy the very same creatures he had created; the answer below reflects the expedience of the action:

> God said, "I know that this question of thine is not from dis-
> Belief and heedlessness and idle fancy;
> Else I should have corrected and chastised thee: I should have
> Afflicted thee on account of this question. (Nicholson 1968, 4:
> 3003-04)

From Rūmi's perspective, and based on his reliance of the Koranic verses, the mere act of questioning the nature of the world would be wrong unless the question would embody the ultimate purposefulness of creation:

> But (I know that) thou wishest to discover in My actions the
> Wisdom and hidden meaning of (phenomenal) duration,
> That thou mayst acquaint the vulgar therewith and by this
> Means make every raw (ignorant) person to become cooked.
> Thou hast become a questioner on purpose to disclose (this
> Matter) to the vulgar, albeit thou art acquainted with it;
> For this questioning is the half of knowledge, and this ability
> (to ask questions) does not belong to every outsider." (Nicholson
> 1968, 4: 3005-09)

The poem ends with the final affirmation of the thesis:

(The creation of) these creatures of the world is for the purpose
of manifestation, to the end that the treasure of (Divine)
providences may not remain hidden.
He (God) said, " I was a hidden treasure" : hearken! Do not
Let thy (Spiritual) substance be lost: become manifest! (Nicholson
1968, 4: 3028-29)

As seen in the above lines, it becomes evident how intricately intellectual issues occupy the main part of Donne's poetry and how in perspective any such deliberations are absent or else deliberately dismissed in Rūmi's work.

Back to the discussion of the intellectual nature of Donne's mind and, as succinctly put by Gardner, it can be concluded that his poems are more poems of faith rather than of vision (xxxv). What Gardner has observed as poetry of faith and not that of vision is also a distinction marking the spiritual poetry of Donne's different from that of Rūmi's. The following quatrain from "Holy Sonnet XIX," clearly highlights how faith alone constitutes the backbone of Donne's work:

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one;
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vows and in devotion. (Donne 1-4)

"Vows" as well as "devotion" as implied in the above lines are the result of faith and not vision. In Rūmi's surrendered life, on the other hand, vision and not faith alone is the forwarding force:

THE Prince of mankind (Mohammed) said truly that no
One who has passed away form this world
Feels sorrow and regret for having died; nay, but he feels
A hundred regrets for having missed the opportunity,
Saying to himself, "Why did I not make death my object—
Death which is the store-house of all fortunes and riches,
And why, through seeing double, did I fasten by lifelong
Gaze upon those phantoms that vanished at the fated Hour?"
The grief of the dead is not on account of death, it is
Because they dwelt on the phenomenal forms of existence
And never perceived that all this foam is moved and fed
By the Sea. (Nicholson 1968, 4: 1450-54)

The sense of effortless surrender to the Divine and the natural conviction that God is the Supreme governor of life are characteristics that make Rūmi's poetry not only different from that of Donne's but from many of other mystics like Sanā'i and Attār in the Islamic tradition of mysticism. In his discussion of the mystical poetry of Attār and Iraqi, for instance, Dashti points out how their poetry deals thematically with Sufi thoughts in the same way that Rūmi's work does and yet how different his poetry is from Attār's and Iraqi's in having assumed a definitive vision and the shape of spiritual excitement (102). The liveliness and ecstasy seen in the above lines are the result of the poet's broad vision. Faith by itself, in other words, could not have been the contributing factor to the joy and liveliness seen in these lines.

Although Donne's poetry lacks in substance the vision by which Rūmi's work is characterized, he insists quite extensively in his work on how important it

is for any believer to have a clear intellectual stand in regards to religion. Even in the intellectually strenuous period of Donne's life, and despite the inner struggles to reach at the idea of the Divine, an unwavering belief in the existence of Truth is paramount. This spiritual conviction is a bridge bringing the two poets together. Moreover, both mystics emphatically highlighted the duty of all human beings to pursue Truth; in fact the profession of both Rūmi and Donne as preachers, shows the amount of importance they attached to guiding their fellow human beings in following the route of Truth.

In this connection, one can observe throughout the *Maṯnavi* as well as in Donne's poetry the sharp edge of the poets' criticism against those who have blind faith. Thus one reads in the *Maṯnavi*:

> The Parrot looking in the mirror sees
> Itself, but not its teacher hid behind,
> And learns the speech of Man, the while it thinks
> A bird of its own sort is talking to it.
>
> So the disciple full of egotism
> Sees nothing in the Shaykh except himself.
> The Universal Reason eloquent
> Behind the mirror of Shaykh's discourse__
> The spirit which is the mystery of Man__
> He cannot see. Words mimicked, learned by rote,
> `Tis all. A parrot he, no bosom-friend! (Nicholson 1968, 5: 1430-35)

The allegorical anecdote above clearly highlights the concern the poet shows for people who are only followers. Nicholson's explanation of the allegory further clarifies the point. He thus writes that "Parrots in the East are trained to talk by means of a mirror, behind which is a curtain. Allegorically the 'mirror' is the holy man, who serves as a medium between the 'parrot,' i.e. the disciple, and God, the invisible Speaker and Teacher" (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 59).

Donne's "Satire III" explores the same theme. The poem opens, almost bluntly with a significance attached to the "soul's devotion," equating it with the "virtue" that had unconditional "worth" during the "blinded age" of pagan antiquity:

> Kind pity chokes my spleen; brave scorn forbid
> Those tears to issue which swell my eyelids;
> I must not laugh, nor weep sins, and be wise,
> Can railing then cure these worn maladies?
> Is not our mistress, fair religion,
> As worthy of all our soul's devotion,
> As virtue was to the first blinded age? (Donne 1-7)

The consequences of blind faith are recounted in detail in the next few lines contrasting it with the unconditional courage and valor arising out of illuminated faith:

> Are not heaven's joys as valiant to assuage
> Lusts, as earth's honor was to them? Alas,
> As we do them in means, shall they surpass

Us in the end, and shall thy father's spirit
Meet blind professors in heaven, whose merit
Of strict life may be imputed faith, and hear
Thee, whom he taught so easy ways and near
To follow, damned? O if thou dar'st, feat this;
This fear great courage and high valor is. (Donne 8-16)

The repetition of the word 'blind' in these lines, is highly significant and reechoes the theme of the poem also explicitly elaborated on, in the following lines:

Dar'st thou aid mutinous Dutch, and dar'st thou lay
Thee in ships, wooden sepulchers, a prey
To leaders' rage, to storms, to shot, to dearth?
Dar'st thou dive seas and dungeons of the earth?
Hast thou courageous fire to thaw the ice
Of frozen North discoveries? And thrice
Colder than salamanders, like divine
Children in the oven, fire of Spain, and the line,
Whose countries limbecks to our bodies be,
Can'st thou for gain bear? And must every he
Which cries not "Goddess!" to thy mistress, draw,
Or eat thy poisonous words? Courage of straw! (Donne 17-28)

The different reasons mentioned in the above lines are all manifestations of uninformed faith: people going to war out of folly and greed; men combating one another for laziness and intellectual shallowness. The only real enemy to be fought is "the foul Devil":

O desperate coward, wilt thou seem bold, and
To thy foes and His (Who made thee to stand
Sentinel in His world's garrison) thus yield,
And for forbidden wars, leave the appointed field?
Know thy foes: the foul Devil, whom thou
Strivest to please, for hate, not love, would allow
Thee fain his whole realm to be quit; and as
The world's all parts wither away and pass,
So the world's self, thy other loved foe, is
In her decrepit wane, and thou, loving this,
Dost love a withered and worn strumpet; last
Flesh (itself's death) and joys which flesh can taste,
Thou lovest; and thy fair goodly soul, which doth
Give this flesh power to taste joy, thou dost loathe. (Donne 19-42)

"The appointed field" in the first line of this part of the poem, is the domain of the people who choose to worship wittingly. Contrariwise the people of blind faith "strive to please" "the foul Devil." The love of Devil and the love of world for the unwitting accompany one another and both reflect the love of "flesh (itself's death)" in contrast to true love inspired by faith. "Seek true religion," is Donne's recommendation:

Seek true religion, O where? Mirreus,
Thinking her unhoused here, and fled from us,
Seeks her at Rome; there, because he doth know
That she was there a thousand years ago;
He loves her rags so, as we here obey
The statecloth where the Prince sat yesterday. (Donne 43-48)

True religion, then, can neither be found in what is left behind "at Rome,"[20] nor "here" where "we … obey/The statecloth where the Prince sat yesterday." Illogical and passionate support of either religion is not correct. As the poem continues different motivations and justifications of various religious sects become more obvious.

Through metaphor and analogy, Graius, and Phrygius, two of the poem's main figures are shown to represent the followers of blind faith. Graius's passivity is a reflection upon people who are simply followers with no vision; Phrygius "abhor All" "because all cannot be good" and because he is one who "Knowing some women whores, dares marry none." Garcchus, the third character "loves all as one." All are, therefore, advised to seek the best faith which follows illumination. Adoring or worshipping an image and protesting against it "may all be bad"; yet to "doubt wisely" is productive:

> To adore, or scorn an image, or protest,
> May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
> To stand inquiring right is not to stray;
> To sleep, or run wrong is. (Donne 76-79)

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[20] In his denial of the supremacy of any one single religious doctrine over the other and more specifically speaking, in his controversial rejection of Catholicism, Donne's sermons and poems reveal two distinct trends. Arthur F. Marotti distinguishes the two kinds of objection as "theological" or "religious" vis-à-vis "political" or "religiopolitical" ("John Donne's Conflicted Anti-Catholicism" 358, 359). In his religious anti-Catholicism, Donne according to Marotti, "takes an adversarial stance against Roman Catholicism on behalf not only of English Protestantism, but also as he repeatedly emphasizes, in the interests of a catholic Christianity grounded in the fundamentals of faith derived from scripture, the church fathers, and the early councils of the church" (358). Donne's "political" anti-Catholicism, on the other hand, is "connected … to the ongoing international struggle of the English Protestant church (and the monarchs who functioned as its head) with the pope, European Catholic powers, missionary priests (particularly Jesuits), and native English Catholics who were perceived as politically subversive or threatening" (358, 359).

As the above last two lines of this part of the poem suggest, it is permissible, from Donne's perspective to stop, to doubt, and to inquire about "right." Too much carelessness in the question of faith as well as blind insistence on it, are despised, however:

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must go;
> And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so;
> Yet strive so, that before age, death's twilight,
> Thy soul rest, for none can work in that night. (Donne 79-84)

The path to Truth is not an easy one to travel; Truth stands "On a huge hill" that is "Cragged and steep." Yet it is worth striving for and the quest has to be taken place before old age, before "death's twilight" surrounds us with the darkness of "night." Thus, Donne continues:

> To will implies delay, therefore now do. (Donne 85)

Delay is permissible, as long as it is powered by the engine of "will." It will, then, lead to illuminated faith. The metaphor in the following lines juxtaposing the difficult task of both the body and the mind when challenging deeds and intellectual endeavor are required, justifies the delay:

> Hard deeds, the body's pain; hard knowledge too
> The mind's endeavor reach, and mysteries
> Are like the sun, dazzling, yet plain to all eyes. (Donne 86-88)

The mysteries of religion, though "dazzling" "like the sun" are not impossible to resolve and once the Truth is found, it has to be honored:

> Keep the truth which thou hast found; men do not stand
> In so ill case here that God hath with His hand
> Signed kings blank charters to kill whom they hate,
> Nor are they vicars, but hangmen to fate.
> Fool or wretch, wilt thou let thy soul be tied
> To man's laws, by which she shall not be tried
> At the last day? (Donne 89-95)

The only true allegiance is to God; man and his laws will, in the long run, prove limited in virtue:

> Oh, wilt it then boot thee
> To say a Philip, or a Gregory,
> A Harry, or a Martin taught thee this?
> Is not this excuse for mere contraries
> Equally strong? Cannot both sides say so? (Donne 95-99)

Philip II of Spain, Pope Gregory XIII (or Gregory XIV), Henry VIII of England, and Martin Luther are alluded to in the above lines as representing heads of varieties of religions which can each be "equally strong." Each side can, from Donne's point of view, claim to be right in their belief:

> That thou mayest rightly obey power, her bounds know;
> Those passed, her nature, and name is changed; to be

Then humble to her is idolatry.
As streams are, power is; those blest flowers that dwell
At the rough stream's calm hand, thrive and do well,
But having left their roots, and themselves again
To the stream's tyrannous rage, alas, are driven
Through mills, and rocks, and woods, and at last, almost
Consumed in going, in the sea lost:
So perish souls, which more choose men's unjust
Power from God claimed, than God himself to trust. (Donne 100-10)

Based on these lines, mankind is destined to perish, if the path to Truth is not chosen willfully and wittingly. Informed faith is the only venue to man's salvation, from Donne's viewpoint. Through a detailed analysis of imagery and symbolism in the poem, Bryon Thomas Herek has arrived at the conclusion that "Donne's concern in the third satire is with the method by which truth is attained ... rather than with fixing truth to any one faith" (195). The term "rockes," for instance, as based on Herek's observation, is unambiguous in referring to organized religion[21] (194). In this connection, moreover, Gardner also writes that the "Satire is directed not so much against the differing Christian confessions as against the insufficient reasons for which men adhere to them—from unthinking conservatism or unthinking love of novelty, from laziness and the desire to avoid

[21] In his argument, Herek refers his readers to Matthew 16, where Christ pronounces, "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rocke I will build my church" and continues by highlighting how Catholic theologians of the age interpreted the poem—based on the term "rockes"—towards their own goal of "legitimating their claim as the one true church." The protestants, of course, and as Herek reminds us, also used the term to their own advantage and argued that the "plural form [i.e., 'rockes' as opposed to 'rock'] appears to confer legitimacy on the various Christian sects of Europe" (194, 195).

trouble, or from a shallow skepticism which thinks creedal differences unimportant" (xviii).

According to P. M. Oliver, Donne shows himself to be most concerned "with the English situation" in Satire III (57). Oliver elaborates on this thesis by stating that

> What gives comprehensiveness to his satire on inadequate spiritual motivation is the inclusion of two figures who serve to warn of states of mind which can easily develop from watching Christian factions locked in bitter dispute: contemptuous rejection of all the Churches on the one hand, and amiable toleration of them on the other. Phrygius and Gracchus, who are evoked to represent these tendencies, are the satire's heretics. No one searching in the correct frame of mind, the speaker implies, would espouse either Phrygius's agnosticism (or atheism) or Gracchus's indifferentism. The inclusion of two options which are made to seem intrinsically wrong demonstrates that certain limitations are imposed in the search for religious truth. Some goals are clearly not legitimate—unlike Catholicism and Church of England Calvinism, which are possible options if they are embraced intelligently … . (57)

Satire III bears a specific importance in this research as it bridges the idea of religious tolerance as one of the widely discussed subjects in both Rūmi and

Donne. The poem's complete "lack of interest in specific religious doctrines" (Oliver 58) is a significant motif bridging Donne's work and that of Rūmi's. As clearly seen in the following lines from the poem,

> The Truth … is wherever a person locates it, provided that they conduct a proper search—and Phygius is like the rest in not conducting such a search for himself. All of this means that the poem's famous evocation of the search for Truth is not 'a paean to Truth' … but an image of the need for every person to find their own truth (as we might put it four hundred years on)… Because truth is where individuals locate it, Donne's hill of Truth is, for all its cragged steepness, a rather nebulous landmark, entirely lacking the definition of James I's 'steep hill' upon whose top 'the true visible Church' is to be found ...Satire III's hill will appear differently to different people. (Oliver 58)

The rigid conclusion at the end of the poem that people who believe in one type of Truth are saved and those who fail to search for it are the wrong-doers is a common motif in both Rūmi and Donne as will be discussed shortly.

Throughout the Holy Sonnets and the satires as well as in the two *Anniversaries*, the constant effort on the part of the poet to convince himself and his audience of the supremacy of one religion over the other is a central question. The opening lines of "Holy Sonnet XVIII" are illuminating in this connection:

Show me, dear Christ, Thy spouse, so bright and clear.
What, is it she which on the other shore
Goes richly painted? or which robbed and tore
Laments and mourns in Germany here? (Donne 1-4)

The explicit reference to the Church of Rome in the first two and a half lines of the stanza is paralleled with the allusion to Protestantism, inclusive of Lutheranism and Anglicanism in lines three and four (Patrides 350). The entire history of the different attractions of both religions is, of course, further enhanced in the remaining part of the poem:

Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year?
Is she self-truth and errs? Now new, now outwore?
Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
On one, on seven, or on no hill appear?
Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
First travail we to seek, and then make love?
Betray, kind husband, Thy husband, Thy spouse to our sights,
And let mine amorous soul court Thy mild Dove,
Who is most true and pleasing to Thee then
When she is embraced and open to most men. (Donne 5-14)

The poem's theme connects it to "Satire III" in which a reference to different religions is made in a similar manner and the search for "true religion" is emphasized. After the devil and the "worlds selfe" are named as foes, the advice to seek "true religion" follows towards the end of this part:

Know thy foe, the foule devil h'is, whom thou
Strivest to please: for hate, not love, would allow
Thee faine, his whole Realme to be quit; and as
The worlds all parts wither away and passé,
So the worlds selfe, thy other lov'ed foe, is
In her decrepit wayne, and thou loving this
Dost love a withered and worne strumpet; last,
Flesh (it selfes death) and joyes which fleshe can taste,
Thou lovest; and thy faire goodly soule, which doth
Give this flesh power to taste joy, thou dost loath;
Seeke true religion. (Donne 33-44)

As Patrides has pointed out in a footnote to the poem, the seekers after "true religion" are the Catholic *Mirreus,* the Calvinist *Crants*, the Anglican *Graius,* the separatist *Phrygius*, and the Erastian *Graccus* (160). Although all these figures are representatives of different religions, as already discussed, they are "blind' in not being able to see that different religions are like women in different countries who seem different as they choose different attires:

Graccus loves all as one, and thinkes that so
As women do in divers countries goe
In divers habits, yet are still one kinde;
So doth, so is Religion; (Donne 65-69)

In spite of his conversion from Catholicism to Anglicanism, however, Donne remained convinced that the differences between churches were not matters of substance and he could see that the core in all Churches was the same

as seen in the discussion of "Satire III" previously. The universality of all religions in the mind of two poets, as already mentioned, is thus another link bringing the two together. The following poem from the *Maṣnavi* is a reflection of the same thought in Rūmi:

> A certain man gave a dirhem to four persons: one of them
> (a Persian) said, "I will spend this on *angur*."
> The second one was an Arab: he said, "No, I want *inab*, not
> *Angur*, O rascal!"
> The third was a Turk; and he said, "this (money) is mine:
> I don't want *`inab*, I want *uzum*."
> The fourth, a Greek, said, "Stop this talk: I want *istafil*."
> These people began fighting in contention with one another,
> Because they were unaware of the hidden meaning of the names.
> In their folly they smote each other with their fists: they were
> Full of ignorance and empty of knowledge.
> If a master of the esoteric had been there, a revered land many-
> Languaged man, he would have pacified them;
> And then he would have said, "With this one dirhem I will
> Give all of you what ye wish.
> When without deceit ye surrender your hearts (to me), this
> Dirhem will do all this for you. (Nicholson 1968, 2: 3681-89)

The assertion of the universality of all religions within Christianity, follows years of intellectual doubt and internal conflict. For Rūmi, on the other hand, there never existed any doubts in regards to the fundamentals of his belief. In other words, nowhere in the works of Rūmi, can one locate an internal conflict or any emotional battle to overcome doubts of any sort. Moreover, according to

Lewisohn, "The Sufis' advocacy of the 'unity of religions,' constituted a unique ecumenism which had its origins in a visionary consciousness (*kashf-i hudūrī*) rather than an intellectual inter-faith dialogue (*bahth-i aqlī*) ..." ("The Transcendental Unity of Polytheism & Monotheism in the Sufism of Shabistari" 379). The world and all creatures as well as his own existence were all signs of his unwavering belief in his religion and they explicitly demonstrate his unconditional devotion to the path he had chosen as seen in the following lines from *Divan*:

> What is to be done, O Moslems? for I do not recognize myself.
> I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem.
> I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea;
> I am not of Nature's mint, nor of the circling heavens.
> I am not of earth, nor of water, nor of air, nor of fire;
> I am not of the empyrean, nor of the dust, nor of existence, nor of entity.
> I am not of India, nor of China, nor of Bulgaria, nor of Saqsin;
> I am not of the kingdom of 'Iraqain, nor of the country of Khorasan.
> I am not of this world, nor of the next, nor of paradise, nor of Hell;
> I am not of Adam, nor of Eve, nor of Eden and Rizwan.
> My place is the placeless, my trace is the Traceless;
> 'Tis neither body nor soul, for I belong to the soul of the Beloved. (Nicholson, *Dīvān-i Shamsi Tabrīz* 125)

The conviction alluded to in these lines and which accompanied Rūmi throughout his life followed no period of hesitation and inner intellectual battle, however.

Regardless of the context of the two poems, it is very interesting to note that despite the cultural and historical gaps, the two poets speak of the same universality in religious conviction—of course, one within Christianity and the other as it deals with the main religions explicitly mentioned in the poem.

In spite of the overall metaphysical and philosophical bent of Donne's mysticism, one can easily observe that in his first religious poem—that happens to be a satire and not a divine poem—his subject is human nature, the relation of human beings to each other, to moral obligations, and to the true duty of human beings and finally their relationship with God. In the very first line of the poem, Donne takes an open stand against the vanity he sees in himself and thus asks it to leave him alone with the "consort" of his few favorable books:

> Away thou fondling motley humourist,
> Leave me, and in this standing wooden chest,
> Consorted with these few books, let me lie
> In prison, and here be coffined, when I die …
> Shall I leave all this constant company,
> And follow headlong, wild uncertain thee? ("Satire I" 1-4, 9-10)

"The constant company" of books in religion, politics, philosophy, history, and poetry—as mentioned in the poem—is all the certainty the speaker needs to have; the certainty his self is incapable of providing him:

> First swear by thy best love in earnest
> (If thou which lov'st all, canst love any best)
> Thou wilt not leave me in the middle street,

Though some more spruce companion thou dost meet,
Not though a captain do come in thy way
Bright parcel gilt, with forty dead men's pay,
Nor though a brisk perfumed pert courtier
Deign with a nod, thy courtesy to answer.
Nor come a velvet Justice with a long
Great train of blue coats, twelve, or fourteen strong,
Wilt thou grin or fawn on him, or prepare
A speech to court his beauteous son and heir. (Donne 12-24)

The unreliability of the "self," and the commitment to the true essence in humanity make all mundane occupations highly resentful to him; flattery and similar pretentious behavior have no place in Donne's world. Thus, he advises these unpleasant aspects of his personality to "leave" him:

For better or worse take me, or leave me:
To take, and leave me is adultery. (Donne 25-26)

"To take, and leave" would be "adultery." Implicit in these lines is also the fact that moral obligation of some kind should govern human beings and their relationships. Man stooping low for worldly gain and committing themselves to vice would become susceptible to "hate virtue":

Oh monstrous, superstitious puritan,
Of refined manners, yet ceremonial man,
That when thou meet'st one, with inquiring eyes
Dost search, and like a needy broker prize
The silk, and gold he wears, and to that rate

So high or low, dost raise thy formal hat:
That wilt consort none, until thou have known
What lands he hath in hope, or of his own,
As though all thy companions should make thee
Jointures, and marry thy dear company.
Why shouldst thou (that dost not only approve,
But in rank itchy lust, desire, and love
The nakedness and barrenness to enjoy,
Of thy plump muddy whore, or prostitute boy)
Hate virtue, though she be naked, and bare? (Donne 27-41)

As seen in the above lines, man easily falls prey to riches and fame and becomes a "beast" as the following lines of the satire reflect:

At birth, and death, our bodies naked are;
And till ours souls be unapparelled
Of bodies, they from bliss are banished.
Man's first blessed state was naked, when by sin
He lost that, yet he was clothed but in beast's skin,
And in this coarse attire, which I now wear,
With God, and with the Muses I confer. (Donne 42-48)

It is, in spite of all the "coarseness" of the attire that man continues to relate to God and "the Muses." The self, however, claims to be guilty; the speaker shuts the door of the world of knowledge only to follow the misguided soul he has within:

But since thou like a contrite penitent,
Charitably warned of thy sins, dost repent
These vanities, and giddinesses, lo
I shut my chamber door, and come, let's go.
But sooner may a cheap whore, that hath been
Worn by as many several men in sin,
As are black feathers, or musk-colour hose,
Name her child's right true father, 'mongst all those:
Sooner may one guess, who shall bear away
The Infanta of London, heir to an India;
And sooner may a gulling weather spy
By drawing forth heaven's scheme tell certainly
What fashioned hats, or ruffs, or suits next year
Our subtle-witted antic youths will wear;
Than thou, when thou depart'st from me, canst show
Whither, why, when, or with whom thou wouldst go. (Donne 49-64)

The untrustworthiness of the self, due to its weaknesses, leads the speaker in the poem to regret having listened to that inward voice as it had led him to sin "against [his] my conscience":

But how shall I be pardoned my offence
That thus have sinned against my conscience?
Now we are in the street; he first of all
Improvidently proud, creeps to the wall,
And so imprisoned, and hemmed in by me
Sells for a little state his liberty;
Yet though he cannot skip forth now to greet
Every fine silken painted fool we meet,
He them to him with amorous smiles allures,

And grins, smacks, shrugs, and such an itch endures,
As 'prentices, or school-boys which do know
Of some gay sport abroad, yet dare not go. (Donne 65-76)

The luster and extravagance of the mundane allure the weak self and he immediately falls prey to it, to its shame and destruction in the end:

Many were there, he could command no more;
He quarrelled, fought, bled; and turned out of door
Directly came to me hanging the head,
And constantly a while must keep his bed. (Donne 109-12)

In a similar way, Rūmi quite frequently highlights the essentials of human behavior and the dynamics of human relationships based on the dichotomy he draws between the true and false sides of the human nature. To Rūmi as well as to Donne the essentials of religious belief constitute a serious meditation on God and the acceptance of moral obligations. Hence we read in the following lines from the *Maṣnavi*:

The stipulation of (implied in) *he that comes with good (shall be rewarded tenfold*) does not consist in doing (good); it consists in bringing this good to the presence of God.
You have a substance (essence) human or asinine (bestial):
(bring that to God): how can you bring (to Him) these accidents (of word or deed) which have passed away?
As regards these accidents of prayer and fasting—since (that Which) does not endure for two moments becomes naught—

'Tis impossible to carry over the accidents (into another state);
but they (may) take away diseases (defects) from the substance,
So that the substance becomes changed by means of this
Accident, as when disease is removed by abstinence.
By exertion abstinence, (which is) the accident, becomes the
Substance: through abstinence the acrid mouth becomes (sweet
as) honey. (Nicholson 1968, 2: 944-50)

According to the poem, then, it is "substance"—the true aspect of human nature—that should be presented to God; "essence" which is remote from "accidents." Yet "these accidents" are not always altogether useless as they eventually help bring out that essence, Rūmi believes:

Land, through sowing, is turned into ears of corn; remedies
For the hair turn the hair into chains (make it long and curly).
Conjugal intercourse was the accident; it passed away, and
The substance, (which is) the child, was produced from us.
The mating of horse or camel is the accident; the object is
The birth of the colt, (which is) the substance.
Similarly, the planting of the garden is the accident; the
Produce of the garden became the substance—behold the object
(for which the garden was planted)!
Regard, also, the practice of alchemy as the accident; if a
Substance is produced by that alchemy, bring (it into view).
(Nicholson 1968, 2: 950-54)

The contrast between substance and accident alluded to in the above lines in metaphors, thus highlights the fundamental dichotomy that exists in the poet's

worldview between true self and its shadowy reflection. The same idea is explored again in the following lines:

> (This world is) like a bath-room which is very hot, (so that)
> you are distressed and your soul is melted (with anguish).
> Although the bath-room is broad and long, your soul is distressed
> and fatigued by the heat.
> Your heart does not expand (you feel no relief) till you come
> Out: what advantage, then, is the spaciousness of the room to you?
> Or (it is) as though you should put on tight shoes, O misguided
> One, and go into a wider desert.
> The spaciousness of the desert becomes narrow (distressing);
> That desert and plain becomes a prison to you. (Nicholson 1968, 3: 3545-50)

According to these lines, mankind limits itself to the world of senses and shows no interest in sublimity because of its bestial nature. If one, however, gains control over the mundane he would not be able to tolerate the material world any more than one can stand the dense, suffocating atmosphere in a bath-room. In a similar way the desert and plain lose their grandeur and spaciousness once the superceding reality of the Sublime is acknowledged by the enlightened.

The range of the subjects covered in the *Maṣnavi*, the collection's consistent tone, and the stable point of view from which the poems are told have resulted in the classification of Rūmi's work as the highest in the canon of Islamic mystical poetry to the extent that some have stated that the *Maṣnavi* is the Koran in the Persian language. Donne's devotional poetry, although quite serious and

intense in subject matter and tone, does neither reveal the same consistency in content nor in form. The latter's devotional poetry, in other words, is an outcome of a gradual process and even within the extensive period of his religious life, Donne seems to be struggling to reach the stability so consistently present in Rūmi's work. The survey and analysis of the poems discussed so far in this chapter, however, do not reflect this gradual process in Donne. The following discussion will highlight the important parts of this procedure and clarify the points of convergence and divergence between the two mystics in their artistic careers.

In this connection, Altizer has effectively analyzed the different sides of Donne's struggle to reach an intellectual conviction in the *Holy Sonnets* and has stated that

> The religious or spiritual failure of the poems is directly related to the lack of a positive 'concetto' unified enough to obliterate the two conflicts that for years kept Donne imprisoned within himself. One conflict is between the willful self-control required by reason and the loss of self and will required by faith. The other is between a conception of Christ as Lord and Judge and a conception of Him as suffering Man and merciful Redeemer. The first image of Christ resembles that of the transcendent God of the Old Testament; the second image resembles more closely the Pauline concept of Christ as the second Adam... These conflicts

appear simultaneously on spiritual (theological as well as psychological) and imaginative (poetic) levels … . (83)

The image of a tormented soul oscillating between two poles and struggling for its salvation is prevalent in the *Holy Sonnets*. "Holy Sonnet I" is exemplary in this regard:

> Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?
> Repaire me now, for now mine end doth haste,
> I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,
> And all my pleasures are like yesterday, (Donne 1-4)

In connection to the internal religious conflict constituting the subject matter of many of the *Holy Sonnets*, Altizer believes that during the period of the *Holy Sonnets* "Donne seem[ed] to need to unravel, to understand logically the mysteries of Christian faith. And he want[ed] to know exactly where he [stood] in relation to the them" (86). "Holy Sonnet XVIII" illustrates this point clearly:

> Show me deare Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and clear.
> What! Is it she, which on the other shore
> Goes richly painted? or which rob'd and tore
> Laments and mournes in Germany and here? (Donne 1-4)

The echoes of the mysteries and complexities he finds as inherent in the religion abound in the *Holy Sonnets*. As Altizer has stated "[f]rustration and

fragmentation characterize virtually all of the *Holy Sonnets*. Pride, desire to control, and self-will obstacles to grace" (87-88). Thus we read in the second stanza of "Holy Sonnet III":

> In mine Idolatry what showres of raine,
> Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart did rent?
> That sufferance was my sinne I now repent,
> 'Cause I did suffer I must suffer paine. (Donne 4-8)

As in other religious poems of this period, the articulation of sin is the theme of the above stanza. "Pride" and "self-will" having led to sin are further exposed in the following quatrain of the sonnet:

> Th'hydroptique drunkard, and night-scouting thiefe,
> The itchy Lecher, and self tickling proud
> Have the remembrance of past joyes, for releife
> Of coming ills. ... (Donne 9-12)

The sad persona's struggle in these poems, most of the time, does not culminate in a relief from sin, and despair remains to be the dominant mood of these poems:

> To (poore) me is allow'd
> No ease; for, long, yet vehement griefe hath beene
> Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne. (Donne 12-14)

This is a characteristic not seen in Rūmi's mystical poetry. There is no sign of fear of God in Rūmi, which is a major differentiating factor between the two poets. What marks the sharpest distinction between Rūmi and Donne in this respect is the notion of 'despair' which originates not necessarily from the two poets' different worldviews and convictions, but from the general religious tenets governing their poetry. Despair is considered to be of the greatest sins in Islam and nowhere in the works of Rūmi can one see the signs of dismay and disappointment[22]:

> BEYOND the stars are Stars in which there is no combust
> Nor sinister aspect,
> Stars moving in other Heavens, not the seven heavens
> Known to all,
> Stars immanent in the radiance of the Light of God,
> Neither joined to each other nor separate.
> Whoso hath his fortune from these Stars, his soul drives
> Off and consumes the unbelievers.
> God sparked His Light over all spirits, but only the blest
> Held up their skirts to receive it;
> And, having gained the largesse of light, they turned their
> Faces away from all but God.
> That which is of the sea is going to the sea: it is going to
> The place whence it came—
> From the mountain the swift-rushing torrent, and from our
> Body and soul whose motion is inspired by love. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 754-58)

[22] In Christianity the greatest sin is against the Holy Ghost for which there is no redemption.

The poem just quoted from the *Masnavi*, can well represent the majority of Rūmi's poetry in the absence of dismay and bleakness that quite often characterize Donne's both secular and non-secular work. Donne, as clearly seen in "Holy Sonnet III" discussed in this context, seems to be traveling between the two extreme ends of the spectrum: the belief in the mercy of God and the sense of personal unworthiness.

In other Holy poems like the "La Corona" and "The Litany," on the other hand, the conflicts within the *Holy Sonnets* are not present. The subject matter in these poems is ways of devotion as Donne apparently cannot disentangle his thoughts from the religious teachings he had received during his childhood. In "The Trinity," for example, one can read how the concept of Trinity is the main mystical element in the poem and how there is no expression of any religious conflict in the poem:

> O Blessed glorious Trinity,
> Bones to Philosophy, but milke to faith,
> Which, as wise serpants, diversly
> Most slipperinesse, yet most entanglings hath,
> As you distinguish'd undistinct
> By power, love, knowledge bee,
> Give mee a such selfe different instinct
> Of these let all mee elemented bee,
> Of power, to love, to know, you unnumbered three. (Donne 1-9)

In fact, the adoration for the person of Christ as the merciful Savior and the different components of the Christian religion constitute the backbone of these

groups of poems and in this way characterize them as distinct from poems that embody the poet's intellectual and religious turmoil.

Yet even within this group of poems Donne has been criticized for lacking genuine spirituality as a characteristic of other mystics like Rūmi. In this regard, Gardner believes that in Donne's devotional poetry "The Divine poet is to some degree committed to showing himself as he would be rather than as he is, and is thus always in danger of overspending his spiritual capital" (*The Divine Poems* xvii). Miss Gardner's observation, is precisely one of the main shifting points in the task of comparing the devotional poetry of Rūmi and Donne. Rūmi, as already mentioned was all love and devotion to the Sublime. His mysticism, religious teaching, and practices all originated directly from the heart and were not similar in essence to the way Donne would consider his belief as a tool for salvation or spiritual investment. The humility which Donne used to preach about, and allude to, in the second half of his life, is not only in essence in sharp contrast "to his detached, cynical, and almost never humble tone in his earlier poetry" (Gardner xvii) but also to Rūmi's humble tone, throughout.

Donne's humble tone is mostly conspicuous in his sermons and particularly in a speech like the following where he comments on the littleness of man by comparing him to the basest of creatures:

> LET MAN BE SOMETHING; how poore, and inconsiderable a ragge of this world, is man! Man, whom Paracelssus would have undertaken to have made, in a Limbeek, in a Furnace: Man, who,

> if they were altogether all the men that ever were, and are, and shall be, would not have the power of one Angel in them all, whereas all the Angles, (who, in the Schoole are conceived to be more in number, than, not onely all the species, but all the individualls of this lower world) have not in them all, the power of one finger of Gods hand: Man, of whom when David had said, (as the lowest diminution that he could put upon him) I am a worme, and no man, He might have gone lower, and said, I am a man and no worm; for man is so much less than a worm, as that wormes of his own production shall feed upon his dead body in the grave, and an immortall worm grow his conscience in the torments of hell. (St. Paul's Christmas Day [1629], Part III)

In spite of the overall note to humbleness in some of Donne's poems he, unlike Rūmi, "is not remarkable for any spiritual gifts and graces" (Gardner xvii). Gardner further states that "He is by nature arrogant, egotistical, and irreverent. His mind is naturally skeptical and curious, holding little sacred" (xvii). The arrogance and the sarcasm present in his work, are of course, not consistently traceable in Donne's poetry. In the *Holy Sonnets,* as already mentioned, there is barely any sign of the cynicism of the Donne of the earlier years. The humility and the sense or surrender to faith and religion seen in the *Holy Sonnets* are close to the prevalent tone in the *Maṣnavi* and the *Divan.* Rūmi is endowed with all different kinds of spiritual gifts and his humbleness and sense of humility

throughout his life put him in sharp contrast to the personality of the younger Donne.

The *La Corona* sonnets, as already mentioned, reflect the serene tone of the calmer Donne. These poems in comparison to poems like "The Litany," however, are more formal and structured. Part of the formality of the poems is due to their specific structure as they are all centered around theological mysteries surrounding the life of Christ (Cousins and Grace 89). They are as stated by Gardner, "inspired by liturgical prayer and praise—oral prayer; not by private meditation and the tradition of mental prayer" (xxii). The first quatrain of the "Annunciation" clearly reflects the mature tone and the more structured format of the poem compared to "The Litany":

> Salvation to all that will is nigh,
> That All, which always is All every where,
> Which cannot sinne, and yet all sinnes must beare,
> Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die, (Donne 1-4)

As already mentioned, in Donne, the conviction in the legitimacy of his belief was a gradual process expressed in poems that explicitly reflect the procedure. In this regard, Altizer states how in Donne the "poetic evolution, like its spiritual counterpart, does not develop slowly and surely" and how it rather "advances unsteadily, by starts and stops and changes of direction" (71). Altizer has effectively surveyed the process and mentions how it "proceeds through several stages, beginning with the formalistic exercises of 'La Corona' and 'A

Litanie,' in which orthodox Christian symbols and images are wittily explored, juggled, and reworked" (71). The following poem from "The Litany" highlights the playful handling of these Orthodox images to the fullest:

> The sacred Academie above
> Of Doctors, whose paines have unclasp'd, and taught
> Both bookes of life to us (for love
> To know thy Scriptures tells us, we are wrought
> In thy other booke) pray for us there
> That what they have misdone
> Or mis-said, wee to that may not adhere,
> Their zeale may be our sinne. Lord let us runne
> Meane waies, and call them stars, but not the Sunne. (Donne 109-17)

The metaphor of comparing the great ancient theologians and saints to the "stars" and not the "Sunne" together with other similar figurative devices in the above lines is highly peculiar to Donne and his abrupt style of incorporating his beliefs in poetry. "As we move to the *Holy Sonnets*," Altizer argues, they "tend to argue with divine paradoxes and symbols, while begging them to exercise their supposed authority by granting him grace. These are marked largely by unresolved conflicts between reason and faith, as well as by frustrations resulting from contradictory images of Christ with whom he is unable to establish a fundamental rapport" (71). The second part of "Holy Sonnet XI" highlights the gap:

But by my death cannot be satisfied
My sins, which pass the Jews' impiety:
They killed once an inglorious man, but I
Crucify him daily, being now glorified.
Oh let me them His strange love still admire:
Kings pardon, but He bore our punishment.
And Jacob came clothed in vile harsh attire
But to supplant, and with gainful intent,
God clothed himself in vile man's flesh that so
He might be weak enough to suffer woe. (Donne 5-14)

As explicit in the above lines as in many other of the *Holy Sonnets*, it is largely the speaker's sense of worthlessness compared to Christ and the acknowledgment of sin expressed through heavier images that distinguish this category of poems from the previously mentioned groups. As we move on from the *Holy Sonnets* to the *Anniversaries*, the spiritual quest takes a different shape. In the *First Anniversary*, Altizer argues, "the rational, critical imagination has a field day, dissecting the decayed body of the world which has lost its power of self-symbolization" (71). The subject of the poem is of a less serious nature and imagery and figurative devices correspond to it accordingly. Corruption in the natural world, as seen in the following lines from the poem, originate after the fall of Lucifer; following man's fall from Heaven, nature becomes corrupted as well:

Then, as mankinde, so is the worlds whole frame
Quite out of joynt, almost created lame:
For, before God had made up all the rest,
Corruption entred, and deprav'd the best:

It seis'd the Angels, and then first of all
The world did in her Cradle take a fall,
And turn'd her braines, and tooke a generall maime
Wronging each joynt of th'universall frame. (Donne 191-98)

"In the *Second Anniversary*," Altizer continues, "the poetic, religious imagination almost unexpectedly finds its own voice (during parts of the poem), and finally creates a language capable of symbolizing the self united with the transcendent" (71). The following lines from the poem highlight the intertwining of the essential joys in both lives and assume a highly mystical character much resembling the sublime language in Rūmi:

But pause, My soule, and study ere thou fall
On accidentall joyes, th'essential.
Still before Accessories doe abide
A triall, must the principall be tride.
And what essentiall joy can'st thou expect
Here upon earth? What permanent effect
Of transitory causes? Dost thou love
Beauty? (And beauty worthyest is to move)
Poore couse'ned cose'nor, that she, and that thou,
Which did begin to love, are neither now. (Donne 383-92)

A brief survey of Rūmi's work illustrates a consistent and coherent use of imagery and figurative devices employed towards a unified worldview even when the poet makes a dichotomy between seemingly contradictory notions like 'essence' and 'accident' as already explored at the beginning of this chapter. An

example from different periods of his career will illuminate the coherence of his ideology and poetic technique. Thus we read in the first book of the *Masnavi*:

> When beams of wisdom strike on soils and
> Clays
> Receptive to the seed, Earth keeps her trust:
> In springtime all deposits she repays,
> Taught by eternal Justice to be just.
>
> O Thou whose Grace informs the witless clod,
> Whose Wrath makes blind the heart and eye
> Within,
> My praise dispraises Thee, Almighty God;
> For praise is being, and to be is sin. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 508-11)

The wholesomeness and purposefulness of the universe is the subject of the above lines. In this regard Nicholson reminds his readers of the intellectual conviction shared by Ibn Arabi and Rūmi about "the whole inanimate creation as potentially [being] endowed with life, perception, knowledge and reason" (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 95). The lively and unambiguous—mostly visual — images at the heart of the poem reflect the unity and coherence within the poet's mind. In a similar way, the following poem from the fourth book of the *Masnavi* reflects the same coherent worldview and its corresponding mental pictures:

> 'Twas a fair orchard, full of trees and fruit
> And vines and greenery. A Sufi there

Sat with eyes closed, his head upon his knee,
Sunk deep in meditation mystical.
"Why," asked another, "dost thou not behold
These signs of God the Merciful displayed
Around Thee, which He bids us contemplate?"
"The signs," he answered, "I behold within;
without is naught but symbols of the Signs."

What is all beauty in the world? The image,
Like quivering boughs reflected in a stream,
Of that eternal Orchard which abides
Unwithered in the hearts of Perfect Men. (Nicholson 1968, 1: 1358-62)

The coherence alluded to, in the above lines, within the world of nature and the nature of mankind is a main constituent of Rūmi's comprehensive ideology as already highlighted in previous discussions. The purposefulness of life and the beauty of nature can be reached by "symbols" "God the Merciful [has] displayed around"; man does not, however, need to substantially rely on these "symbols" as within himself he bears the most powerful "signs" towards the meaningfulness of existence and God.

The intertwining of the poetic and the spiritual is one of the greatest achievements of both poets and in Donne it becomes mostly evident in sonnets like "The Ecstasy," "The Canonization," "The Relique," and the "Nocturnall" where love is treated from a religious perspective. In this connection, Altizer states how "religious language and religious connotation, [transform] love into a

sacred experience" in this group of poems (76, 77). As an example the concluding part of "The Ecstasy" is highly illuminating:

> As our blood labors to beget
> Spirits as like souls as it can,
> Because such fingers need to knit
> That subtle knot which makes us man:
>
> So must pure lovers' souls descend
> To affections, and to faculties,
> Which sense may reach and apprehend,
> Else a great Prince in prison lies. (Donne 61-68)

Another good example of the fusion of the poetic and the spiritual traditions in Donne is the *First Anniversary* in which the non-religious subject is modeled after the Ignatian tradition[23]. The *Second Anniversary* is more obvious in the applicability of the meditative pattern to the poem in dealing with the relationship with God.

It should, moreover, be noted that in Donne, the central metaphor in some poems juxtaposes the miracles of love and religious miracles; according to Altizer, "The Canonization" and "The Relique" are exemplary cases (76). The following lines from the "Canonization" are highly revealing:

---

[23]The meditative system of St. Ignatius Loyola. The procedure will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legends be, it will be fit for verse;
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
As well a well-wrought urn becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
And by these hymn , all shall approve
Us *canonized* for Love. (Donne 28-36)

The religious image and language in the final line of the above stanza, epitomizes the blending of the poetic and spiritual and bears a close link with "The Relique" in which the same idea is highlighted in a more explicit language:

If this fall in a time, or land,
Where mis-devotion doth command,
Then he that digs up will bring
Us to the Bishop and the King
To make us relics; then
Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I
A something else thereby;
All women shall adore us, and some men;
And, since at such time miracles are sought,
I would have that age by this paper taught
What miracles we harmless lovers wrought. (Donne 12-22)

The explicit reference to "Mary Magdalen" and the highly religious language employed in these lines distinguish the poem from many works having a similar

theme in other groupings of Donne's poetry already discussed. Moreover, both poems clearly show that Donne's difficulties in coming to terms with the nature and conditions of earthly love had led him to the more convincing realm of divine love as he later on, develops in the *Holy Sonnets*. The juxtaposition of the two realms, in Rūmi's work, however, is neither as mechanically imposed on his poetry nor does it reflect a progressive mechanism. The majority of the Persian mystical poems deal with the intertwined nature of divine and earthly love; Rūmi, in other words, is not the only Persian poet addressing the issue of the divine in a way different from Donne's.

The juxtaposition of the poetic and the spiritual is at the heart of Rūmi's work too as explicit in the following lines from the *Maṣnavi*:

> 'Tis said, the pipe and lute that charm our ears
> Derive their melody from rolling spheres;
> But Faith, o'erpassing speculation's bound,
> Can see what sweetens every jangled sound.
>
> WE, who are parts of Adam, heard with him
> The song of angels and of seraphim.
> Our memory, though dull and sad, retains
> Some echo still of those unearthly strains.
>
> Oh, music is the meat of all who love,
> Music uplifts the soul to realms above.
> The ashes glow, the latent fires increase:
> We listen and are fed with joy and peace. (Nicholson 1968, 4: 733-38)

Music, of course, is the link in the above lines between the two realms of the spiritual and the poetic. Moreover it is interesting to note that the poem is based more specifically on Pythapras's well-known theory as implicit in Nicholson's commentary on the poem (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 32). In a footnote to the poem, Nicholson writes how

> According to the Pure Brethren (*Ikhwanu `ls-safa*) of Basra, 'since the celestial spheres revolve and the planets and stars are moved, it follows that they must have musical notes and expressions with which God is glorified, delighting the souls of the angels, just as in the corporeal world our souls listen with delight to melodies and obtain relief from care and sorrow. And inasmuch as these melodies are but echoes of heavenly music, they recall to us the spacious gardens of Paradise and the pleasures enjoyed by the souls dwelling there; and then our souls long to fly up thither and rejoin their mates.'(*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 32)

It is also noteworthy that Sufis associate music with the pre-existence of the soul (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 32). This belief is based on the Koranic verse (*Koran* VII, 171) which states that while listening, the soul hears again "the Voice of God to which all human souls responded in eternity … and the anthems of the Heavenly Host." (*Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 32)

Orthodoxy constituting the structure and backbone of the mystical poetry of both poets is another defining characteristic of the work of the two mystics and can be explained through the references to the holy books in their poetry respectively. Donne's familiarity with the Scripture, manifests itself mostly in his religious poetry. The first poem of the "La Corona" series reflects this familiarity to the fullest:

> The ends crown our works, but Thou crown'st our ends,
> For, at our end begins our endless rest;
> This first last end, now zealously possessed,
> With a strong sober thirst, my soul attends. (Donne 8-12)

As explained in the footnote to the poem, the "first last end" in the third line of the quatrain is an allusion to "The Saviour" and refers to "Revelation 1.11" (Clements 109). Additionally, according to some critics, Donne's views about the precedence and origin of certain verses in the Bible had been authentically established as they preceded any literary or historical criticism of the Bible (Müller 67); this point further proves the extensive background of the poet in Christianity.

In this regard, T.S. Eliot writes how Donne had been familiar with the writings of both Catholic and Protestant theologians (69). He continues that Donne "had read all the works of Cardinal Bellarmine as well as a host of his other contemporaries including Luther, Calvin, Melanchthon, Peter Martyr,

among the Protestant writers and Cajetan, Valdez, and Fra Victoria among the more philosophical of Roman commentators" (69). Eliot further states that

> The controversial literature of the Jesuits was at his fingertips; finally, he was acquainted with many of those writers of the later Renaissance whose orthodoxy, from either a Roman or a Protestant standpoint, is rather doubtful, such as Nicholas of Cusa and the host of students who exploited the Kabbalah, the hermetic writings and other compilations of the same sort. In the Kabbalah Donne was always interested. It was the learned equivalent of the cross-word puzzle. In this connection it is not without significance to refer to Donne's ancestry. (70)

In tracing back Donne's religious thoughts and ancestry as reflected in his poetry, Eliot has reached a conclusion of much relevance to the topic of this dissertation. The critic argues that "Jesuitism is a phenomenon typically of the Renaissance" and that it is "excessively Romantic" by nature. (Eliot 75) Eliot continues his discussion by stating that

> The fact that the Society of Jesus is of Spanish origin is an indication that it is outside of the Graeco-Roman classical tradition. There is plenty of evidence that its founder St. Ignatius was a romantic, a reader of romances, and admirer of Amadis of

> Gaul, a sort of Don Quixote. There is some evidence, too, that he drew his inspiration, and the constitution of his order, which differs radically from every other Christian order, not from Christian, but from Mohammadan examples. Its principles are non-Aristotelian, and are surprisingly like those of certain Moslem orders flourishing in Spain in Ignatius' time. I refer to an interesting and rare work, Hermann Müller: *Les Origines de la socitie de Jesus.* That the Spanish mystics of the sixteenth century were also romantics, that they and St. Ignatius have a certain affinity with Martin Luther and Rousseau, I hope to indicate at various points. (76)

In other words, the interest in the empirical side of mysticism as seen in Donne's poetry could be the outcome of his Jesuit upbringing and familiarity with Jesuit texts that had been highly influenced by Islamic teachings and mysticism in return. The interplay and the traffic of themes and approaches between the spiritual writings of Rūmi and Donne can in the light of such historical account become more meaningful and rewarding.

Donne's decision to join the Anglican Church has, indeed, been the result of his profound knowledge of Jesuitism; in a similar way his battle with Jesuitism was the outcome of his extensive knowledge in the area. In this regard, T.S. Eliot tells us how he believed "Jesuitism [was] one of the most significant phenomena of Donne's time" (89). For the purpose of definition Eliot continues,

> [He had] tried to show that in Jesuitism the center of philosophical interest is deflected from what it was for the Middle Ages, and that this marks an important alteration of human attitudes. Donne throughout his life was in contact with Jesuitism; directly in his early family live, later by his studies, and not least by his battle with the Jesuits. For you can hardly fight anyone for very long without employing his weapons and using his methods; and to fight a man with ideas means adapting your ideas to his mind. Conflict is contact. The air which Donne breathed was infused with Jesuitism. (89)

The quotation justly highlights the amount of Donne's indebtedness to Jesuitism with its significant links to Islam.

A brief look at the structure of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola based on Muslim patterns as researched by M. Hermann Müller and reported by Eliot is quite illuminating at this point:

> [Contemplate – (I) Your apartment faintly lighted by the last rays of day, or the feeble light of a lamp; your bed which you will never leave except to be laid in your coffin; all the objects which surround you and seem to say, You leave us for ever! (2) The persons who will surround you: your servants, sad and silent; a weeping family, bidding you a last adieu; the minister of religion,

praying near you and suggesting pious affections to you. (3) Yourself stretched on a bed of pain, losing by degrees your senses and the free use of your faculties, struggling violently against death, which comes to tear your soul from the body and drag it before the tribunal of God. (4) At your side the devils, who redouble their efforts, to destroy you; your good angel, who assists you for the last time with his holy inspirations.] (105)

The impact of the Islamic tradition on the above mentioned procedure is immense. As mentioned by Eliot, in his *Les Origines de la Compagnie de Jésus: Ignace et Lainez*, Müller had efficiently explored "the similarities of the six steps of a Jesuit novitiate's spiritual progress to specific Mohammedan practices" (76). Eliot quotes Müller saying: "Ces latitudes qui n'existent dans aucun autre ordre monastique, se retrouvent au contraire dans la pratique musulmane" (76).

The rigid structure in some of the sonnets bears a close connection, almost an identical imitation of the threefold structure of the meditations: composition (memory), analysis (understanding), colloquy (afflictions, will) and reflects the degree of Donne's indebtedness to Jesuit methods that bear a link to the Muslim tradition as discussed earlier. "Holy Sonnet XII" exemplifies this pattern to the fullest:

Father, part of His double interest
Unto Thy kingdom, Thy Son gives to me;
His jointure in the knotty Trinity

He keeps, and gives to me His death's conquest.
This Lamb, whose death with life the world hath blest,
Was from the world's beginning slain, and He
Hath made two wills, which with the legacy
Of His and Thy kingdom do Thy Sons invest.
Yet such are those laws that men argue yet
Whether a man those statures can fulfill;
None doth; but all-healing grace and Spirit
Revive again what law and letter kill.
Thy law's abridgement and Thy last command
Is all but love; oh let that last will stand! (Donne 1-14)

The first four lines of the poem clearly function as "memory" and are reminiscent of religious facts stated in the first quatrain. The second part of the poem extending from lines 5 to 12—and more specifically from lines 5 to 10—is the analysis of the main idea of the poem that culminates in the colloquy in the concluding two lines. Furthermore, as Martz has stated,

> General or fragmentary parallels between Donne's poetry and Jesuit methods of meditation are strongly supported by the fact that at least four of the 'Holy Sonnets' appear to display, in their total movement, the method of a total exercise: they suggest the 'premeditation' or the recapitulation, in miniature, of such an exercise; or at least, a poetical structure modeled on the stages of a complete exercise. Such a threefold structure, of course, easily accords with the traditional 4-4-6 division of the Petrarchan sonnet,

> and thus provides a particularly interesting illustration of the way in which poetical tradition may be fertilized and developed by the meditative tradition. (qtd. in Clements 231)

"Holy Sonnet XI" is exemplary in this case:

> Spit in my face you Jews, and pierce my side,
> Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucify me,
> For I have sinned, and sinned, and only He
> Who could do no iniquity hath died:
> But by my death cannot be justified
> My sins, which pass the Jews' impiety:
> they killed once an inglorious man, but I
> Crucify him daily, being now glorified.
> Oh let me them His strange love still admire:
> Kings pardon, but HE bore our punishment.
> And Jacob came clothed in vile harsh attire
> But to supplant, and with gainful intent,
> God clothed himself in vile man's flesh that so
> He might be weak enough to suffer woe. (Donne 1-14)

The first two quatrains of the sonnet corresponding to the Petrarchan division accord with first 'memory' and then 'understanding' in the meditative pattern. The sestet follows the two stanzas and completes them, both in the poetic tradition and its meditative counterpart by incorporating the final component, 'will' or 'colloquy.' The above discussion clearly demonstrates the intricate blending of systematic meditation with personal issues raised passionately in the

form of questions or at least concerns. In this regard, Archer writes that the structure of the holy sonnets is the "result of a fusion of both the poetic and meditative traditions" (qtd. in Clements 237).

In connection to the exact structure of the *Holy sonnets* and the impact Jesuit meditative system bore on them, Donne's critics are divided into several groups. Clements effectively summarizes how Martz stresses that

> We cannot find an entire meditation according to the threefold Ignatian plan in many of the 'Holy Sonnets' the reason being that the sonnets are short whereas the exercise covered a long period of time. Such poems correspond to merely a fragment of the meditation, usually the colloquy or conclusion. But he discusses sonnets 11, 7, 9, and 5 that capture the entire exercise. These and sonnet 12 he separates into three parts to show their threefold structure corresponding to the three parts of the meditation. (qtd. in Clements 238)

"Miss Gardner" Clements continues, "does not stress the threefold structure but rather sees the meditation as twofold. She adds that in Sonnet 9 Donne has taken liberty with the material of meditation. Thus the two scholars in applying the same hypothesis have arrived at dissimilar conclusions. The difference is in the concept of meditative process as held by each. We have to see which meditative writer influences the critic." (238)

As argued by Archer, however, the clear structure of some poems like 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' corresponds to the threefold Ignatius system. Archer mentions how in "the first stanza, the situation is dramatically set forth, reconstructed, of course, from the memory. The scene is the parting of the two lovers, and the poet is particularly concerned with the tears they are shedding at parting. The reader gets a picture of these tears in the first stanza" (qtd. in Clements 241):

> As virtuous men pass mildly away,
> And whisper to their souls to go,
> Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
> "The breath goes now," and some say, "No," (Donne 1-4)

In the second stanza, Archer continues, "the reasoning is about the significance of these tears" (qtd. in Clements 241):

> So let us melt, and make no noise,
> No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
> 'Twere profanation of our joys
> To tell the laity our love. (Donne 5-8)

Tears, as highlighted by the above stanza, can cause "floods" that belong to a world detested by lovers who want to keep their love away from "the laity." In the last stanza, "the will presents a petition, to the love of the poet rather than to God, but none the less a petition" (qtd. in Clements 241):

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like the other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun. (Donne 33-37)

The "firmness" explicitly demanded by the persona in the above lines echoes "the will" and "the petition" which Archer has so aptly described in his analysis of the poem.

As seen, the impact of Christianity in general, and Catholicism and Jesuitism, in particular is immense on Donne's poetry. Rūmi's quotations from the Koran throughout his poetry make an interesting link between him and Donne in revealing the degree of his indebtedness to Islamic thought and scholarship. The reference to the Koran is prevalent throughout the *Maṣnavi* as are allusions to the words and sayings of the Prophet. In the following lines from the *Maṣnavi* Rūmi goes so far as to express how "obligatory it is to accept the saying of the Prophet":

The old woman brought the bed-clothes and spread them.
She said, "There is no possibility (of speaking), and my heart
Is filled with burning (grief).
If I speak, he will hold my suspect; and if I say nothing, this
Affair will become serious."
A man who has not suffered any pain is made ill by a bad omen.
It is obligatory to accept the saying of the Prophet, "If ye
Pretend to be sick beside me, ye will become (actually) sick."
(Nicholson 1968, 3: 1577-80)

At this juncture it is important to note the direct influence Sufi poetry in general has received from the Koran. As highlighted by Nasr, "Sufi literature is deeply rooted in the Noble Quran and *Hadith*[24] for its content as well as form" (*Sufi Essays* 172).

Yet in terms of artistic expression, Rūmi's playful imagination and wide range of subjects endow a life and vigor to his poetry not shared by Donne. The light, easy-going rhythm and the colorful imagery of most of Rūmi's poetry make the actuality of the Koranic influence less ponderous. Thus we read in the *Masnavi* in the well-known story of Moses and the shepherd:

> Moses saw a shepherd on the way, crying, "O Lord Who
> Choosest as Thou wilt,
> Where are Thou, that I may serve Thee and sew Thy
> Shoon and comb Thy hair?
> That I may wash Thy clothes and kill Thy lice and bring
> Milk to Thee, O worshipful One;
> That I may kiss Thy little hand and rub Thy little feet and
> Sweep Thy little room at bed-time."
> On hearing these foolish words, Moses said, "Man, to
> Whom are you speaking?
> What babble! What blasphemy and raving! Stuff some
> Cotton into your mouth!
> Truly the friendship of a fool is enmity: the High God is
> Not in want of suchlike service." (Nicholson 1968, 2: 1720-24)

[24] The words and sayings of the Prophet.

The vivid images of housekeeping make the poem remarkably gay and lively. The seriousness of subject matter in most cases in Rūmi's poetry is thus balanced with lively images and a playful imagination.

Undoubtedly extraordinary imaginative power and imagery deviating from its traditional course are the characterizing features of Donne's Metaphysical poetry as well. Yet this deviation operates in an immensely different manner. In Donne's poetry, the ponderousness of subjects like sin and guilt correspond, to the images and figurative devices that are neither playful nor lively. In fact, to correspond to the serious subject matter, the images and figurative devices in Donne's poetry are as ponderous as the archaic language employed most of the time. This difference manifests itself not only in the type of images that are different in the spiritual poetry of both poets, but also within Donne's singular work extending from the time of the *Songs and Sonets* to that of his religious poetry. Thus we read in "Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness":

> Whilst my physicians by their love are grown
> Cosmographers, and I their map, who lie
> Flat in this bed, that by them may be shown
> That this is my South-west discovery
> *Per fretum febris*, by these straits to die,
>
> I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;
> For, though their current yield return to none,
> What shall my West hurt me? As West and East?
> In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the resurrection. (Donne 6-15)

The serious concept of death, once again, is the subject of the above lines. As typical of Donne and in direct correspondence to the earnestness of the matter, Donne makes use of Metaphysical conceits to elaborate on his point. The analogy of likening mankind to a "little world" is of course, not uncommon in Metaphysical poetry and the poetry of the periods preceding it. Yet what makes the poem singular in its attraction is the extended metaphors—conceits—of heat, i.e., *febris* and West corresponding to actual afflictions as fever and death in mankind (Clements 128). As seen in the above two poems, there is a major difference in the manifestation of the poets' imagination in their respective works in spite of the commonality of their views.

The almost complete absence of liveliness in Donne's religious poetry is one of the other differentiating factors between Donne and Rūmi. Ms. Gardner notes how the "absence of ecstasy makes [Donne's] divine poems so different from his love poems. There is an ecstasy of joy and an ecstasy of grief in his love poetry; in his divine poetry we are conscious almost always of an effort of will. In the Holy Sonnets there is passion and longing, and in the Hymns some of the 'modest assurance' which Walton attributed to Donne's last hours, but there is no rapture" (*The Divine Poems* xxxv). "Holy Sonnet XIII" is among this group of poems that clearly reflects this absence of joy and ecstasy:

> What if this present were the world's last night?
> Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell,
> The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
> Whether that countenance can tee affright,

Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light,
Blood fills His frowns, which from His pierced head fell. (Donne 1-6)

Yet, the intense desire to gain proximity to God, the easy pace, and the highly informal situations in most of the Divine poems compensate for the absence of liveliness in making these poems, among the best in the category of divine poetry. The amazing blend of emotion and reason as well as art and religion is Donne's unique achievement and contribution to the field of mystical poetry. The concluding lines of "Good Friday" are illuminating in this respect:

O think me worth Thine anger, punish me,
Burn off my rusts and my deformity,
Restore Thine images so much, by Thy grace,
That Thou may'st know me, and I'll turn my face. (Donne 39-43)

The subject matter of these lines is again the speaker's sense of guilt and the plea to be forgiven. Yet the sincerity of the speaker's tone compensates for the gruesomeness of the matter and immediately bridges the poetry of the two monarchs of concern in this connection. The sincerity of tone and the highly informal settings are features characterizing Rūmi's poetry as well:

At first I was an angel: with all my soul I trod the Way of
Devotion to the service of God.
How should one's first calling be forgotten? How should
The first love fade away from one's heart?
Was it not the hand of His Bounty that saved me? Was it

Not He that raised me up from non-existence?
Who found milk for me in my infancy? Who rocked my
Cradle? He.
The nature that flows in with the milk—can it ever be
Expelled?
Bounty and Grace and Favour are the real substance of
His coin, Wrath but a speck of alloy on it. (Nicholson 1968, 2:
2617-22)

The earnest pleas of the speaker in the above lines echo the sincerity of the tone of the speaker in "Good Friday."

One of the conspicuous characteristics of Rūmi's mystical work, even among his Persian contemporaries and predecessors, is its unique sense of ecstasy, liveliness, and joy. The sense of ecstasy and movement, however, is not mechanically imposed on the poems as seen in the following lines from the *Divan*:

That moon, which the sky ne'er saw even in dreams, has
Returned
And brought a fire no water can quench.
See the body's house, and see my soul,
This made drunken and that desolate by the cup of his
Love.
When the host of the tavern became my heart-mate,
My blood turned to wine and my heart to kabab.
When the eye is filled with thought of him, a voice
Arrives:
'Well done, O flagon, and bravo, wine!'

Love's fingers tear up, root and stem,
Every house where sunbeams fall from love.
When my heart saw love's sea, of a sudden
It left me and leaped in, crying, 'Find me.'
The face of Shamsi Din, Tabriz's glory, is the sun
In whose track the cloud-like hearts are moving. (Nicholson 1977, p.26)

The liveliness of images in these lines echoes Rūmi's unwavering belief in the power of love. Images of fire in the moon and the soul and body equally drunk by love are among other vividly portrayed pictures in the poem that add to it a natural liveliness not seen in many other poems of the kind. The jovial tone of the poem, intertwined with the happy subject matter in many of Rūmi's poems as in the above lines, thus highlight the main difference between Rūmi and Donne in the category of devotional poetry.

Lastly in this extensive discussion, attention should be paid to the expression of both poets' wonder at God. As Hester writes, one "consistent note of Donne's works, regardless of genre or time of composition, is the expression of his 'wonder' at the divine Creator, as he phrased it in his Devotions, 'in whose words there is such a height of figures, such voyages, such peregrinations to fetch remote and precious metaphors, such extensions, such spreadings, such curtains of Allegories, such third Heavens of Hyperboles'—a God of incredible wit, one might dare to suggest, not unlike his own 'metaphysical' Muse" (18). The following poem from "La Corona" sheds more light on the discussion:

Salute the last and everlasting day,
Joy at the uprising of this Sun, and Son,
Ye whose just tears, or tribulation
Have purely washed, or burnt your drossy clay;
Behold the Highest, parting hence away,
Lightens the dark clouds, which He treads upon,
Nor doth He by ascending, show alone,
But first He, and He first enters the way. (Donne 1-8)

The wonder expressed in these lines is, of course, directed at the Son. The poem, together with a host of other holy poems in this collection, however, does ultimately address God as the supreme creator who does not fail to arouse the awe in the mind of the speaker. Statements of awe and admiration in connection to creation and God's power abound in Rūmi.

Chapter Five – Figuring Love[25]

Love is the central theme in the works of both Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi and John Donne. Both were among the few poets who succeeded in writing genuinely passionate poems about love. Even a superficial look at the *Maṣnavi* and the *Divan-e Shams* as well as the *Songs and Sonets* and the *Holy Sonnets* reveals the degree of both poets' indebtedness to amorous subjects. Both Rūmi and Donne were, moreover, devoted clergymen and mystics. In mysticism, both Christian and Islamic, the Love of God and the passionate relationship of the individual to God are foundational. Interestingly enough in Persian/Islamic mysticism, the search for the Divine is equated with love. Out of the conflation of love and mysticism in Persian devotional poetry as well as in the Bible and in Christian mystical poetry arises the allegorical treatment of love as an earthly relationship between the lover and his Beloved. The symbolic description of the facial and frequently bodily features of the persona's beloved in mystical poetry quite often leads to images referring to their physical union. Rūmi, from the very beginning of his career as a mystic poet, and Donne, in the latter half of his, have examined the relation between the seeker of Truth and the Beloved from the erotic perspective. Rūmi essentially owes his incorporation of erotic subjects in the metaphysical context of his poetry to this allegorical bent of his mind as well as to the long tradition set by his Sufi-poet predecessors.

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[25] A version of this chapter has been published in an article entitled: "The Sacred and the Erotic Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi and John Donne: A Comparison." *CRCL: Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 27.4 (2000): 625-644.

There are, of course, several other theories about the ontological question of these erotic subjects in the *Maṣnavi* which will be examined later in this dissertation. To a certain degree these other more or less authentic reasons for the presence of eroticism in Rūmi's work are what make the nature of his eroticism different from that of Donne's. John Donne, on the other hand, treats love from two epistemologically different perspectives, of which only the second resembles Rūmi's views. The effort of this chapter will then be to elucidate the nature of the similarities and differences in the combination of the erotic and the sacred in the poetry of these two literary monarchs.

When Rūmi set out to compose poetry he had already left behind the period of intellectual unrest and metaphysical doubts. His initial encounter with Shams-i Tabrīzi and the historic conversation that took place between them[26] brought Rūmi the peace of mind and the love of God which remained with him for the rest of his life. To Rūmi, then, from the time of the first composition of his poetry it was evident that love was the only safe and secure way of leading the Sufi to the Source of all love, a doctrine upheld by all Sufis. Understandably enough, the *Maṣnavi* opens with the famous poem, "The Song of Reed" in which the reed-pipe stands as a symbol of "the soul emptied of self and filled with Divine Spirit" (Nicholson, *Rūmi: Poet and Mystic* 31):

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[26] It is unanimously believed that on this occasion Shams had stopped Rūmi – then the most renowned preacher of his time—in the middle of a bazaar he used to cross with a group of his followers after his daily sermons and had asked him whom he considered to have a greater place with God, the Prophet Muhammad or Bāyazid-i Baṣtāmī, a famous mystic and a true seeker of Truth. Rūmi is said to have poked fun at Shams for the profanity that the question implied. Shams, on the other hand, is reported by the historians, to have ridiculed and rebuked the great clergyman for his short-sightedness and unwillingness to accept God with his heart rather than his mind and for his strict adherence to the rigid Islamic laws so passionately regarded by his contemporary narrow-minded theologians.

Listen to the reed how it tells a tale,
complaining of separations—
Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-pipe,
my lament hath caused man and woman to moan.
I want a bosom torn by severance,
that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love- desire.
Every one who is left far from his source wishes back
the time when he was united with it.
In every company I uttered my wailful notes,
I consorted with the unhappy and with them that rejoice.
Every one became my friend from his own opinion;
none sought out my secrets from within me.(Nicholson 1968, 1: l-6)

For Rūmi, as it can be read through the above allegorical lines, the love of God is the point of departure. The opening poem is reasonably followed by a long poem narrating the story of a king falling in love with a maiden-servant already in love with someone else. The significance of this narrative poem and a host of other similar stories in the *Maṣnavi* is to elucidate the true nature of love as well as to differentiate between true and derivative love. In Rūmi's philosophy God is the source of all love and "all things participate in God's Love, the motivating force of creation, so all things are lovers."(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* 195) Based on this philosophy Rūmi attributes the attraction that exists between all life's phenomena in life to love. Rūmi's philosophy, however, makes a distinction between the love and attraction between human beings and the attraction between all other creatures, inanimate and animate, including the angels. The differentiating quality of the attraction between human beings is that it is based on

knowledge and, therefore, superior to all other kinds of love.(Zarrin-Kūb, *The Mystery of the Reed-Pipe* 495) Nevertheless, although completely valid, the love and attraction between human beings and all other animate and inanimate creatures derive from the Love of God.

In this respect and from the philosophical point of view of Rūmi, earthly love, although derivative by nature, is a valid relationship and serves as a means of bridging the Sufi with God. In other words, in Rūmi's philosophy, the body is as important as the soul. He does, however, insist that the individual should not stop at the earthly level of love and should transcend it to experience True Love. Put briefly, Rūmi does not consider earthly love as an obstacle in worshipping God. On the contrary, it is in the image of human beauty that Sufis believe one can see the image of God. Based on this tenet of Sufism and the long tradition of Persian mystical poetry, God in the works of Sufi poets is almost always portrayed as either a beautiful woman or a youthful man and the relation between the two is often alluded to in terms of the physical relation between a lover and his beloved. The following poem is a good example of how Rūmi describes women in the *Maṣnavi*:

> When He (God) showed unto him (Iblis) the beauty of women
> that was prevailing over the reason and self-restraint of men,
> Then he snapped his fingers (in glee) and began to dance,
> Crying, "Give me (these) as quickly as possible: I have attained to
> My desire."
> When he saw those languorous eyes which make the reason
> and understanding unquiet,

> And the loveliness of that fascinating cheek in which this
> heart (of man) burns like rue-seed (on the fire),
> Face and mole and eyebrow and lip like cornelian, `twas as
> Though God shone forth through a subtile veil.
> He (Iblis) deemed that coquetry and light springing gait to be
> Like the revelation of Divine glory through a thin veil. (Nicholson 1968, 5: 956-61)

The fact that Iblis plans to make use of the beauty of women as a tool in "stealing people away" from the creator does not contradict the symbolic beauty of them as it is concluded in the last nine lines of the poem. Thus for Rūmi as for all Persian Sufi poets, the exquisite features of a beautiful woman are symbolic of the Beatific Vision. Women, in Rūmi's work, as Chittick has observed, "manifest the divine Attributes of Beauty, Mercy, Gentleness, and Kindness in a relatively direct manner within their outward forms."(*The Sufi Path of Love* 286)

In this respect the vision of the Beloved becomes "the true capital of love."(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* 284) Moreover, "In the language of love, the Face pertains to union. But the Beloved's tresses veil His Face and thus pertain to separation."(Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* 284) Once the Face is seen, the fusion of the lover and the Beloved can take place and nothing can help the lover more in this regard than an embrace:

> I am a brooklet, and you the water, and the kiss of the water
> happens always on the lips of the brook;

> From the water's kiss on the lip of the brook flowers and greenery come into existence. (D 704/7350 f)[27]

Thus, according to Rūmi, "flowers and greenery," explicitly the symbols of life and the beauty of nature, are the direct outcome of the physical contact of the brooklet (the lover) and the water (God). The frequent allusions to the exquisite features of the beloved and the union of the lovers resulting in the coming "into existence" of "flowers and greenery" are thus symbolic of the closeness required in the relationship between the seeker of Truth and Truth throughout the Journey. Or again:

> Give a kiss on your own face, tell the secret into your own ear, Look at your own beauty, speak yourself your praise! (D 2148/ 22738)

The above lines are the continuation of the importance attached to the required proximity between the lovers. They are also symbolically indicative of the natural oneness of the two when the search and the desire for Union with the Divine become the primary occupation in the life of the lover. In other words there is no need for the lover to seek the Beloved in the world without; Truth resides within. By kissing her own face, telling the secrets into her own ear, and looking at her own beauty, the lover is essentially praising the Beloved as they are nothing but one wholesome Being.

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[27] The translated lines cited from the *Divān*, in this chapter, are taken from Annemarie Schimmel's *The Triumphal Sun*. The references following the poems are reproduced after Schimmel's adopted citation system.

Intoxication intensifies the passionate state of the lover and helps him drown himself in the ocean of the beauty of the Beloved. Wine is just one of the resources available to the lover that can help him reach the state of intoxication. References to wine, the cup of wine, the cup-bearer, the tavern, and the drinking companions of the lover are abundant not only throughout the *Maṣnavi* and the *Divan-e Shams*, but also in all Persian mystical literary texts. As it has already been discussed, the symbolically erotic character of these images is, of course, not new in Rūmi and is deeply rooted in other classical Persian mystical texts. Poets as early as Kasai, Farrukhi, Unsuri, Manuchihri, Mas'ūd Sa'ad, Khayyām, Sābir, Imādi, Samā'i, Mujīr, Shams-i Tabasi, and Kamāl al-Dīn Isfahāni are only a few among the many Persian speaking poets preceding Rūmi who have thus explored the intensive relationship of the lover of Truth and Truth allegorically from the earthly perspective.

Music is yet another intoxicating means of achieving union with the Beloved. The reference to musical instruments in Rūmi's works is, however, not as simple as the recurrence of images pertaining to wine and wine-drinking. Rūmi often identifies the musical instrument with the lover and the musician or the player of the musical instrument with the Beloved. Based on this analogy, the life of the musical instrument would be in the hands of the musician and its existence would, thus, entirely depend on whether the Beloved touches it or not. The eroticism of the situation, of course, arises mainly from the fact that Rūmi insists on placing the reed-pipe on the lips of the beloved and the harp or the rebeck on her lap (Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* 212-13):

In the lap of your grace I am like the melodious harp,
Place the plectrum softer and more tenderly, so that you do
not tear my strings! (D 824/8618)

Or again:

I have surrendered my face like the tamburine(daf)
Strike hard strokes and give my face a neck-stroke! (D 3/48 9.)

Indeed, music was for Rūmi an indispensable part of his mystical life. Rūmi believed that music, especially when accompanied by dance, could better help the Sufi empty himself of the self and be fused with the Divine. He is said to have established the structured whirling dance of the dervishes. Interestingly enough in the whirling dance of the dervishes each bodily movement has a specific symbolic meaning. Hence, according to Schimmel the clapping of hands connotes separation and union, the two crucial stages in the Sufi path of Love. (Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* 219) In a similar way whirling itself signifies monotheism, the conviction that towards whatever direction one turns one would always see God and nothing else. Jumping and stepping, likewise, symbolize the conquest of the ego and everything that exists besides God. Finally clapping is believed to derive from the satisfaction of having achieved union with God. It is only under such circumstances that it is permissible for the Sufi to embrace a male partner during the whirling dance. (Hākimi 149-51) In other words, in the concluding state of ecstasy that follows the dance the male partners are often said to embrace one another which would be inexplicable under any other situation.

According to Schimmel, in Rūmi's poetry sensuality is yet another intoxicating means for the lover seeking union with the Beloved. Rūmi believes that for the lover and the thief alike the night is very long:

> Take the Leyla 'Night' (leyl) on your breast, O Majnun:
> The night is the secret chamber of *towhid*, and the day idolatry
> *(Sherk)* and muliplicity ... (D 947/9995)

The above lines imply that for Majnun the night is sacred because the lover can hold Leyla close to his breast. The night is, therefore, referred to as "the secret chamber" of "towhid" or monotheism as it would only allow for the attachment of the pair of lovers and the undeniable fidelity of the lover to the Beloved and no one else. It is noteworthy that the reference to monotheism in these lines highlights the essential tenet of the monotheistic religion of Islam as opposed to other polytheistic and pantheistic beliefs. In the above lines, the separation of the lovers during the day implies the profanity of the lover because of the obligation of attending to daily activities and, thus, being separated from the beloved. It is noteworthy that in the above lines Rūmi has deliberately chosen Leyla as a pun to refer both to night and also to one of the most popular female beloveds in Persian literature. The following lines are, yet, another example of the allegorical importance attached to sensuality in Rūmi's poetry:

> It is fitting that I should not sleep at night, for secretly the
> moon gives a kiss every night to whom who counts the stars.
> (D 97/1087)

In these lines it is the concept of "towhid," and the persistence on the part of the lover to remain awake, "count the stars," and be conscious of the Beloved throughout the night, which qualifies the lover to be kissed by the moon, a heavenly body aware of the divine secrets. Sensuality, as seen in this ghazal and in the world of Rūmi's poetry, can not be limited to the lovers and is extended to the lively, responsive nature and natural bodies surrounding the lovers.

The significance thus attached to the physical union of the lovers and the aptness of this central analogy owes much to one of the most fundamental tenets of Sufism. According to Sufis, complete union with the Beloved results after the annihilation of the *self*; when there remains no distance between the lover and the beloved. The story of the separation and final union of a pair of lovers in the *Maṣnavi* is an allegorical narration by means of which Rūmi elaborates on this significant stage of mysticism. The story concentrates on a pair of lovers who have not seen each other for a long time. After a long period of separation when the lover returns he is again forced to leave his beloved because he did not provide the right answer to her question inquiring about the identity of the visitor. In answer as to who had been knocking at her door the lover had answered: "It's me." To the beloved this answer had implied distance; distance that should not exist but existed between her and her lover. Upon hearing this answer, the beloved asks the lover to leave. A year later when the lover comes back again, this time more mature in his knowledge of the pursuit of love, the same question is put to him and he answers, "It's you," and he is let in. (It is noteworthy that in the Persian language there is an absence of gendered pronouns; the context of the

sentences in Persian gives rise to the appropriate use of gendered pronouns in English.)

The amorous and erotic nature of the stories in the *Maṣnavi* and the poems of the *Divan- Shams* should, thus, be considered against the metaphysical contexts of the works. In other words, Rūmi's erotic poetry is an allegory by means of which he attempts to elucidate the intense mystical relation of the lover of Truth and God. Fundamental as this allegorical way of referring to the Beloved is, it is not the only reason why Rūmi incorporates highly erotic anecdotes in his work. Vulgar language and different sorts of insults as used by the lowly and uncultured members of society appear throughout the *Maṣnavi*. Rūmi, it is essential to know, belonged to the *Malāmatiah* branch of Sufism. The *Malāmatiah* believed in performing different sorts of obscene and even amoral acts to provoke the public to rebuke and condemn them. Practical annihilation of the self, they believed, would follow public condemnation. The state of annihilation would, in turn, lead to complete union with God.

Rūmi incorporates such stories in the *Maṣnavi* also to move against the conventional norms of society and literary production. Rūmi's relaxed life style and the support he showed both in theory and practice for the marginal aspects in life also manifest themselves in the choice of subject matter in his poetry. The close observation of literary conventions and the use of elevated language in poetry, Rūmi believed, were more suitable to the purposes of secular and courtly poets. It is also worth mentioning that Rūmi's father, Bahā-i Valad, one of the

most popular preachers and a celebrated cleric of his time, had also used similar unconventional terminology in his sermons.

Fundamental to Rūmi's philosophy is the distinction that he makes between 'form' and 'meaning'. (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* 19) The world and everything in it, according to the *Maṣnavi,* corresponds to form. Ultimately, "meaning is that thing as it is known to God Himself. And since God is beyond any sort of multiplicity, in the last analysis the meaning of all things is God." (Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love* 19) As Chittick has observed, for Rūmi form and meaning are inextricably connected, yet form is naught when compared to meaning: "form is shadow, meaning the Sun." From this general observation Rūmi is said to have concluded that everything in the world of form should be dealt with in a harsh and undignified manner. Thus the incorporation of such erotic stories in the *Maṣnavi* serve to illuminate the secondary and unrefined character of the world of form as compared to the elevated world of meaning.

Rūmi had always believed that as a Sufi and a preacher he should inform people of his valuable mystical convictions and thought that erotic stories had a better pedagogical value than others in this regard. Besides, Rūmi believed that these stories were highly realistic and deeply rooted in the consciousness of all people. At the same time it was only through highlighting the basic instinctive drives in human beings that Rūmi could demonstrate his superior knowledge of human nature.

In his profound analytical study of Rūmi's works, Zarrin-Kūb has added yet another theory to the above list. According to Zarrin-Kūb, the pressure the

clergy had put on people during the Middle Ages could not be tolerated by the Sufis. Rūmi is among the few clergymen who had revolted against jurisprudence in its strict sense as well as against the rigid doctrine of the Islamic law by basing his mystical approach on secular love, one of the manifestations of which is, of course, eroticism. (Zarrin-Kūb, *Sea in a Pot* 385) After his encounter with Shams, Rūmi had realized that one could better gain proximity to God through the heart than the mind as it was always recommended by the theologians. Allegorical love stories and erotic narratives, he believed, could better reveal a relation thus based on love.

Sufis had, moreover, a reputation for being immoral during Rūmi's time. Part of this reputation was due to the homoerotic character of the gatherings of young men and Sufis in their mystical assemblies. (Zarrin-Kūb, *Sea in a Pot* 385) Zarrin-Kūb is among the many literary historians who report how homosexuality was not viewed from a strictly negative perspective during Rūmi's time. By highlighting erotic stories in the *Maṯnavi*, it is commonly believed that Rūmi wanted to warn the Sufis of the rumors surrounding them.

Understandably enough and although both a celebrated poet and a true seeker of Truth, the explicit erotic character of John Donne's secular and divine poetry resembles that of Rūmi's only on certain levels. Donne's life and literary career, it is important to remember, is divided into two essentially different periods. Based on this dichotomy, two different types of eroticism can be identified in Donne's works. *The Songs and Sonets* is a collection of love poems which belongs to the first half of Donne's life in which one sees more or less a

record of the love experiences of the poet. At the same time and based on these experiences, Donne expresses his attitude towards women in general and several of his female acquaintances in particular. This attitude, understandably enough, ranges from bitter cynicism to sincere admiration and in both cases sexual imagery and erotic language become the means of expressing this attitude. Thus, the erotic character of the *Songs and Sonets* barely owes anything to mysticism and to the relation of the speaker of the poems to the Divine. The passion seen in these poems highlights "love as an actual, immediate experience in all its moods." (Grierson, "Donne's Love Poetry" in *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays* 23) It would, therefore, be quite safe to say that the eroticism that arises from the *Songs and Sonets* is unlike the eroticism that is seen in the *Masnavi* and the *Divan-e Shams*. Nevertheless, even in this gathering of amorous poems love and eroticism are dealt with from at least three different perspectives. Some poems like "The Flea" belong most certainly to the "unruly" period of Jack Donne's life – as he had himself described this period of his life – and celebrate pure appetite in the relation between a man and a woman:

> Mark but this flea, and mark in this
> How little that which thou deny'st me is;
> It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
> And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
> Thou know'st that this cannot be said
> A sin nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
> Yet this enjoys before it woo,
> And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
> And this, alas, is more than we would do. (Donne 1-9)

And thus he concludes in the final couplet:

> Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
> Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee. (Donne 26-28)

The explicit note of seduction in this poem and its erotic character arise from the speaker's reasoning with his presumably coy mistress to yield to him. As stated by Roy Roussel, "The Flea" "[on] its most basic level, … dramatizes the man's attempt to voice his desire forcefully and demand a complementary response from the woman." (23) The poem, undeniably, has one central layer of meaning and is, therefore, quite different from the kind of eroticism explicit in Rūmi's works.

A similar theme is central to "The Indifferent," "a poem celebrating, it would seem, the brash erotic adventurism of the young male lover, a man who is an expert on women and who can joke about them in a self-satisfied manner" (Marotti 76):

> I can love both faire and browne,
> Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betaies,
> Her who loves lonenesse best, and her who maskes and plaies,
> Her whom the country form'd, and whom the town,
> Her who believes, and her who tries,
> Her who still weepes with spungie eyes,
> And her who is dry corke, and never cries;
> I can love her, and her, and you and you,
> I can love any, so she be not true. (Donne 1-9)

The highly sarcastic tone of the poem becomes mostly evident in the last line where the persona summarizes his insatiable appetite when it comes to women. The highly conspicuous tongue-in-cheek ambience of "The Indifferent" is forcefully augmented by the way the persona voices his attitude towards shallow morality that can be extensively seen in women of all types of dispositions.

Donne was born, however, a Roman Catholic and was brought up in a family that had faced severe problems in keeping up their faith. Because of his religious upbringing, he could not rid his mind easily of the inherent conflict that existed between the demands of the body and the soul in Catholicism. The conflict between the platonic notion of love and the physical aspect of it, then, becomes the subject of another set of the love poems like "The Ecstasy." The controversy appears initially settled in the first half of the poem where Donne seems to have embraced the platonic doctrine of love:

> If any, so by love refined
> That he souls' language understood,
> And by good love were grown all mind,
> Within convenient distance stood,
> He (though he knew not which soul spake,
> Because both meant, both spake the same)
> Might thence a new concotion take,
> And part far purer than he came.
>
> This Ecstasy doth unperplex,
> We said, and tell us what we love;
> We see by this it was not sex;
> We see we saw not what did move: (Donne 21-33)

Yet the dilemma is only superficially resolved. According to Grierson, Donne had "consciously or unconsciously ... [set] over against the abstract idealism ... of the Middle Ages" (32) and it remained for him to express the antithesis to the initial stage of the problem in the second part and conclusion of the poem:

> To our bodies turn we then, that so
> Weak men on love revealed may look;
> Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
> But yet the body is his book.
>
> And if some lover, such as we,
> Have heard this dialogue of one,
> Let him still mark us, he shall see
> Small change, when we're to bodies gone. (Donne 69-76)

As these lines clearly argue, the poet has apparently fallen short of believing in a platonic concept of love only, and has come to consider the body an indispensable part in the religion of love. Although a host of critics have argued for and against the mystical meaning implied by "The Ecstasy," to my knowledge no one has ever refuted its expression of the essential conflict that exists between platonic and physical love in the mind of the poet. "The Ecstasy," no doubt, is a complicated poem and, according to Joan Bennett, there are at least three different ways of examining the relation between the soul and the body in this poem:

> The Manichaean view that the body is the work of the Devil;
> the materialist view that 'explains all physical processes by
> physical and chemical changes in the nervous system' and so

> makes the soul non-existent; and the orthodox Christian view that the body and the soul are both from God and therefore both good. (169-70)

Indeed, as aptly highlighted by Elaine Scarry, throughout his sermons and speeches Donne had often insisted on:

> The obligation to touch the human body, whether acutely alive or newly dead, with generosity and fierce decency; and what is most remarkable and perhaps also most moving about this insistence is that he locates the precedent for the generous reflexes of the hand in what he identifies as the willful materialism of the Judeo-Christian God. God, says Donne, has not only repeatedly 'dignified' and 'crowned' the human body, but (invoking the word that becomes nearly electric in its ethical resonance) 'associated' himself with it: he created the body in His own person; he took it as his own in the person of Jesus; he inhabits it in the person of the Holy Ghost. (70)

Clay Hunt's scholarly observation in this regard is also quite illuminating. Donne, writes Hunt,

> is writing against the background of the general Debate between the body and the soul which was the dominant intellectual issue … The two most sharply opposed points of view in this debate can be roughly identified, in their literary manifestation with the Ovidian and the Platonic traditions of Elizabethan love poetry. (187)

Bennett's and Hunt's observation of the dichotomy that existed in the mind of the poet—despite his assertion in his final sermons as well as in some poems like the well-known "Ecstasy"—further supports the poet's unconscious and intensive struggle to come to terms with a stabilized compromise between mind and body which had happened so naturally to Rūmi as to the rest of the poets and philosophers of the Islamic tradition.

As Fatima Mernissi has aptly observed, however, "the Christian concept of the individual as tragically torn between two poles – good and evil, flesh and spirit, instinct and reason – is very different from the Muslim concept."(1) Islam, Mernissi concludes,

> has a more sophisticated theory of the instincts … . It views the raw instinct as energy. The energy of instincts is pure in the sense that it has no connotation of good or bad… . Therefore, in the Muslim order it is not necessary for the individual to eradicate his instincts or to control them for the sake of control itself, but he must use them according to the demands of the religious law. (1)

Based on this doctrine and bearing in mind that for Rūmi the conflict between the flesh and the spirit did not exist, the incompatibility between the eroticism present in this group of Donne's amorous poems and Rūmi's erotic poetry is clarified. It can, however, hardly escape the mind of the reader of the poetry of Donne and Rūmi that at this stage Donne seems to have reached the conviction Rūmi had effortlessly believed in from the very beginning, the belief in love as a passion in which "body and soul alike have their part and of which there is no reason to repent." (Grierson 33)

In the next group of the *Songs and Sonets* love is approached from a totally different perspective. These poems deal neither with the seductively erotic character of love nor with the conflict within the mind of the poet in terms of the physical and platonic aspects of love. In a poem like "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," for instance, one can clearly see the glorification of virtuous love, the kind of love that can exist between a true couple; between the poet and his adored wife:

> Dull sublunary lovers' love
> (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
> Absence, because it doth remove
> Those things which elemented it.
>
> But we, by a love so much refined
> That our selves know not what it is,
> Inter-assured of the mind,
> Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss. (Donne 13-20)

"In love of his wife" Donne is said to have "found the meaning and the infinite value of love."(Grierson 33) The implicit passion in these lines, therefore, can hardly be categorized as erotic. On the contrary, the dominant note of the poem is a "justification of love as natural passion in the human heart the meaning and end of which is marriage."(Grierson 32) Based on the contrast that is drawn between the world of the senses and the mind in the poem, the poet in these lines, differentiates true love between lovers with attachment between men and women based on sensuality. Donne's view on this subject is amazingly close to that of his Persian counterpart. Rūmi too, in numerous anecdotes contrasts true love between individuals with attraction that is based on sensuality only. The story of "The Monarch Who Fell in Love with the Physically Unhealthy Maid and the Ways He Sought to Cure Her" is only one of the many anecdotes in the *Maṣnavi* that echo the theme in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." By describing the miserable situation of the maid whose emotional attachment to a jeweler she falsely thought she was in love with, was preventing the true union of the two, and also by elaborating on her final discovery of the sham nature of her love, Rūmi manages to both treat the sick maid and bring her and the monarch together whose love symbolize true affection in contrast to love based on appearance and sensuality.

In a similar way in "The Undertaking" and "The Relique," "a Platonic Lover proclaims that love of virtue in a woman is superior to carnal love and, like the Hedonists, admits of no possible blending of the two"(Pinka 66):

First, we lov'd well and faithfully,
Yet knew not what wee lov'd, nor why,
Difference of sex no more wee knew,
Than our Guardian Angells doe;
Coming and going, wee
Perchance might kisse, but not between those meales;
Our hands ne'r toucht the seales,
Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free:
These miracles wee did; but now alas,
All measure, and all language, I should passe,
Should I tell what a miracle shee was. ("The Relique" 23-33)

It is, however, in the second period of his life and after taking holy orders and becoming the dean of St. Paul's that the nature of Donne's poetry becomes entirely sacred. In these poems—as contrasted with the love poems—Donne exclusively deals with God and his relation to Him. Nevertheless, some scholars such as Donne's celebrated critic, Helen Gardner, believe that even at this stage Donne was struggling to establish a stable relation with God. Donne's divine poems, writes Gardner, "are the product of conflict between his will and his temperament."("The Religious Poetry of John Donne" 135) In other words, the conviction of the mystical basis of religion and the genuine love between Donne and God was not as sudden as it was with Rūmi. Donne's discovery of the true nature of the relation between God and himself was slow and gradual. This evolutionary process can be seen not only in the second part of Donne's literary career but also as early as the time of the composition of the love poems. The critics, moreover, almost unanimously agree that the structure of the divine poems

as well as the two Anniversaries and even some of the love poems is based on the "Spiritual Exercises" of St. Ignatius Loyola as already discussed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. Nevertheless, despite the highly spiritual dimension of these poems, the employment of sexual imagery in them is highly conspicuous. Donne's "Holy Sonnet X" is illuminating in this respect:

> Batter my heart, three-personed God; for you
> As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
> That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
> Your force, to break, blow, burn and make me new.
> I, like an usurped town, to another due,
> Labor to admit You, but Oh, to no end!
> Reason, Your viceroy in me, me should defend,
> But is captivated, and proves weak or untrue.
> Yet dearly I love You, and would be loved fain,
> But am betrothed unto Your enemy:
> Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
> Take me to You, imprison me, for I,
> Except You enthrall me, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me. (Donne 1-14)

The central matrimonial imagery in the third quatrain of the poem is built upon related images in the first two parts and is continued and augmented by the imagery of rape and "ravish" in the final couplet. The paradoxical way of requesting God to ravish him to be pardoned and made chaste is highly conspicuous in highlighting the passionate relationship of the persona and the "three-personed God."

As we saw in the first part of this discussion the metaphor likening the passionate relation between the individual and God to the erotic relation of a pair of lovers is not considered to be a strange and uncommon comparison in Persian mystical literature and, most certainly not in Rūmi's sacred poems. According to Knox, "the traditions of Christian mysticism [too] allow such symbolism of ravishment as a kind of 'as if.'"(qtd. in *John Donne's Poetry* 256) Likewise, the image of Christ as lover and bridegroom can be seen in these group of poems as an allegory for the mystical relation of the individual and God.

It is, nevertheless, in poems like "Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed" that the erotic character of the poem and the convergence of the sacred and the erotic become most conspicuous. Thus, Hunt observes that in this elegy: "Donne launches into an intricate and detailed analogy between the ecstatic physical consummation of this *affaire de corps* and the consummation of a purely spiritual love in the religious ecstasy of the Beatific Vision."(qtd. in *John Donne's Poetry* 190) It is, undeniably, in the employment of eroticism in the service of mysticism in this poem as well as in some of the holy sonnets and the satires[28] that Donne's method comes closest to Rūmi's. A quick examination of the following lines of the elegy reveals the remarkable similarity of the central image of the poem to the images in Rūmi's poetry examined earlier in this chapter:

> Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee,
> As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be
> To taste whole joys. (Donne 33-36)

[28] Satire III is an appropriate example in this respect.

Based on these lines, bodies are bridges on the road home and on the journey towards Truth. For a thorough union, bodies should be as naked as souls, Donne believes. Closely connected to this discussion and based on the following lines, it would not be altogether wrong to conclude that from Donne's perspective women's beauty is a means of guiding the seeker of Truth to Love:

> Come, madam, come, all rest my powers defy,
> Until labor, I in labor lie.
> The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,
> Is tired with standing though he never fight.
> Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glistering,
> But a far fairer world encompassing. (Donne 1-6)

Or again:

> Gems which you women use
> Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in men's views,
> That when a fool's eye lighteth on a gem
> His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them. (Donne 36-39)

The analogy between the beauty of women with the Attributes of the Beloved was also central to Rūmi's poetry. A specific branch of Sufis called *Hulmāniyān*—named after the founder of the school, Abū Hulmān-i Damishqi—worshipped the beauty of women and young men as manifestations of Divine beauty. According to historical texts of mysticism, these mystics used to kneel down in front of beautiful women or men instantly upon seeing them. Although Rūmi is sąid not to have completely agreed with their doctrines, he had apparently

shown intense interest in this tenet, and the central imagery of beautiful women in his poems is a good proof of this claim. Thus, Donne too, concludes:

> Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made
> For lay-men, are all women thus arrayed;
> Themselves are mystic books, which only we
> (Whom their imputed grace will dignify)
> Must see revealed. (Donne 40-44)

For Donne too women are examples of mystical essence which can help man direct his thoughts to the essence of God. (Hunt 194) The emphasis here, of course, is on the transcendence of True beauty over the derivative one, a topic also central to Rūmi's philosophy. According to Donne, only some men are capable of dignifying the grace and the true, natural, naked self of women that he compares to "mystic books." Women, Donne argues, need to be arrayed only for "lay-men" who likewise cannot appreciate "mystic books" but their "pictures" and "gay coverings."

In the discussion of the erotic character of the poetry of Rūmi and Donne, the implicit note of homoeroticism is also worthy of consideration. Less intense in the metaphysical content, and more sarcastic in tone towards shallowness as a widespread tendency in women, poems like "Song" deviate from the celebration of women, whether divine or earthly, as dignified entities or else mere objects of desire. According to Klawitter, where the subject of the poems is the infidelity and unfaithfulness of the fair sex, the addressees in some of the Donne's love poems are undeniably men (128):

If thou be'st born to strange sights,
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
Till age snow white hairs on thee,
Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And swear
Nowhere
Lives a woman true, and fair.
If thou findst one, let me know,
Such a pilgrimage were sweet.
Yet do not; I would not go,
Though at next door we might meet;
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three. (Donne 10-27)

The concept of homoeroticism in Donne, it is important to note, arises out of displeasure and lack of trust in women and has barely any mystical dimension to it. This class of poems can best be categorized with the first group of *Songs and Sonets* already discussed at the beginning of this discussion. This note of homoeroticism is most evident in poems like "The Blossom" where the poet explicitly states his desire to "be with men." Thus, in the concluding stanza of the poem and after elaborating on the fickleness of the fair sex the poet says:

Meet me at London, then,
Twenty days hence, and thou shalt see
Me fresher, and more fat, by being with men,
Than if I had stayed still with her and thee. (Donne 34-37)

Though the addressee in this poem is neither a man nor a woman but the speaker's heart, the subject of the lines is, most definitely, the faithlessness of women and, according to Donne, enough reason for the poet to prefer men over them.

Accusations of homoeroticism in Rūmi are both due to his life style[29] and the recurrence of images of beautiful young men in some of his most erotic poems. Rūmi's *takhalluss* or pen name which usually appears in the last line of the ghazals, is the very name of his much loved friend, Shams-i Tabrīzi and could hence be another source of this accusation:

Shams-i Tabrīzi's footsteps were above souls' heads
Don't put your feet but rather your head where his footsteps were
(Furūzānfar 1998, 824, Ghazal 2196)[30]

Moreover and as discussed earlier the admiration Sufis showed of the beauty of both women and young men has certainly a mystical characteristic to it that is completely absent in Donne's poetry.

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[29] Rūmi's sam'ā gatherings—attended by men of different ages and the ecstatic dance that characterized them—as well as the long hours he spent alone with Shams. Rūmi's younger son, Alā al-Dīn Muhammed is said to have twice plotted against Shams' life for this very reason.
[30] I have translated the above line myself; this explains the different style of citation.

As mystics and poets Rūmi and Donne have based their works on love. The common sexual imagery and the uncommon erotic language in the religious poetry of both poets are metaphors for the elucidation of the nature of the passionate relation of the lover of Truth and Truth. Interestingly enough, this allegorical treatment of love, mostly manifesting itself in the form of erotic imagery is neither uncommon in Islamic mysticism nor in its Christian counterpart. This is the basic point of resemblance in the convergence of the erotic and the sacred in the works of both poets. Both Rūmi and Donne were, moreover, writing against the dominant restrictive atmosphere of their times. Part of the peculiarity of the stories and poems in their works is, thus, due to their resistance to conform to these restrictive laws. Both poets were also accused of having feelings for the members of their own sex. There are, however, certain other singular factors which determine the unique character of the sacred and erotic poems of each individual poet. Of these is, for example, the fact that Rūmi belonged to the *Malāmatiah* school of mysticism. John Donne's mind, on the other hand, was obsessed with resolving the conflict inherent in Catholicism between the demands of the body and the soul in the love-relation between a man and a woman.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated that in spite of certain ideological and stylistic differences between Rūmi and Donne, the poets share many important thematic interests. While these differences may serve to illustrate how each poet is formed and informed by his contextual specificities, the similarities between Rūmi and Donne point forcefully towards a shared desire for union with Divine. On a different plane, this comparative study suggests that at similar historical junctures, similar preoccupations and thematic concerns will find expression in the works of poets who may belong to disparate cultures with no actual contact with one another.

The dissertation is primarily based on a typological (classificatory) comparison. Throughout my argument, I have drawn the connection between Rūmi and Donne in both the poetic and the mystical traditions. My research has illustrated that Rūmi and Donne excel other poets and mystics in their respective traditions due to specific qualities that draw the two men together. A significant amount of the interrelatedness of the two poets is due to their tendency to deviate from mainstream religious and mystical traditions, as well as the innovative way they chose to express themselves in poetry[31]. In other words, both Rūmi and Donne can be seen as thoroughly immersed in the religious and philosophical traditions of their cultures and times, but their poetry demonstrates a high degree

[31] In this connection, it is important to highlight the fact that Donne is considered to be the founder of the Metaphysical school of poetry that radically distinguishes it from the poetry of all its preceding periods and those following it. Metaphysical poetry is highly characterized by its intellectual nature, the use of peculiar imagery, and the employment of figurative devices of specific nature.

of appreciation for innovation, at the same time. It is important to remind the reader that these innovations spread through all dimensions of their works because underlying their departure from the past is a desire to grasp the intertwining of the self and the Divine. And it is this dialectic that informs their poetry at every level.

The intensive intellectual and highly metaphysical preoccupations of the minds of Rūmi and Donne find their way in the poets' resorting to images, figurative devices, and language not commonly used by their predecessors. References to philosophy, logic, divinity, and religion abound in the works of both poets and make them highly complicated and difficult to understand. Yet, in spite of the highly sophisticated nature of the images in the works of both poets, one notices also frequent references to everyday life. The realistic aspect of the poetry of Rūmi and Donne, in other words, owes much to the allusions made to daily life; references to children, food, disease, sports and games, travel and exploration, animals and a host of other domestic images are present throughout the works of both poets. Most specifically, Donne's consciousness of the facts of life, his short frank words in this connection, and the details to which he pays attention, prove his acute sense of realism. Rūmi, conversely, brings realism to his work mostly through the detailed and graphic tales of the *Maṣnavi.*

In contrast to the intricate imagery as well as the extensive use of complicated figures of speech—as the Metaphysical conceit in Donne- -in the poetry of Rūmi and Donne, one cannot, in general, help but notice the employment of simple words and the colloquial use of language. The general

simplicity of diction and the use of common speech make both poets remarkable literary figures in their respective traditions and at the same time provide a strong link between them.

It is also significant that both Rūmi and Donne have been criticized for bad grammar. The conspicuous grammatical deviations in their poetry, however, demonstrate their disregard for form and literary convention that is in accordance with their general mistrust of orthodoxy and social regulations.

In terms of deviation from orthodoxy, Rūmi is generally known to be one of the forerunners of 'taṣavvuf-i ashiqānah' vis-à-vis 'taṣavvuf-i zahidānah' in the emphasis he lays upon the essential annihilation of the ego to find union with a loving God. Rūmi, in this regard, is different from a host of other Persian mystics who had also deviated from orthodoxy by practicing Sufism, but who had nevertheless, been constantly aware of the fear-inspiring side of God. As explored in detail in the third chapter of this dissertation, Rūmi is the first mystic who has extensively expressed this revolutionary approach to Divine in poetry.

In a similar way, Donne's poetry shows a disregard for orthodoxy, which is much less conspicuous when juxtaposed with Rūmi's work. It will be recalled that Donne was born into a highly strict Catholic family with intense Jesuit affiliations. He, nevertheless, chose to convert to Anglicanism and in this way his career shows a similarity with that of Rūmi in terms of departing from the roots of his religious conviction. Donne's poetry, as seen in the detailed analyses of the poems throughout this study, consistently reveals a dialectic that is informed by the discrepancies inherent in Catholicism.

In a more specific sense, Donne is again comparable to Rūmi in portraying an image of God that is not quite in congruence with relevant images in Christianity and Christian mystical works. Unlike his predecessors, Donne is mostly concerned with the fearful, avenging side of God's face—reminiscent of the Hebrew God of righteousness—as displayed persistently through imagery of repentance and self-punishment and the dominant sense of sin and guilt present in his poetry.

The comparative study of the mystical/spiritual poetry of Rūmi and Donne can also be considered from other than typological perspectives. The thematic approach that investigates the origination of particular themes and motifs in a literary work is, indeed, one of the major contributing factors to this study. Throughout my analysis, I have drawn upon the similarity in the subjects of interest for Rūmi and Donne and have highlighted that man, the world, reality, and Truth are topics that have been extensively addressed by both poets.

Moreover, the poetry of both literary titans reveals a profound involvement with different spiritual notions. The preoccupation of the minds of Rūmi and Donne with essential religious concepts like the sense of obligation between man and God, the notion of sin, and the responsibility of man on earth, as well as notions like death, mutability of love, and fascination with sensuality bind the two poets together and make them distinct from each other, at the same time, through the different approaches they adopt to express their views. These dialectics in approach constitute and inform a major portion of this dissertation.

The comparison also thematically investigates the notion of love used mostly as an allegory in the devotional poetry of Rūmi and Donne. The analysis also addresses how each poet has responded to earthly love and the way each has eventually juxtaposed it with its divine counterpart.

The biographical approach has also been of much significance in this study. Despite the fact that this approach has quite frequently been criticized for being out-dated, it cannot altogether be dispensed with, since—as it is still being argued—a poet's work cannot be easily divorced from his/her life. In this respect and as discussed in the first chapter, the shared experience of religious prosecution the two poets went through has been a highlighting factor.

Last but not least important is the intrinsic approach, which concentrates on the literary qualities of the texts. The analysis of the literary characteristics of the devotional poems of Rūmi and Donne is addressed partially in this dissertation and only in conjunction with the main classifactory and thematic methods adopted for this analysis. It is noteworthy that, based on the essential similarities drawn between Rūmi and Donne, each of the different methodologies can be a basis for a different comparative study of the two poets.

Finally, with reference to the main typological approach used for this comparative study, the reader should be reminded that Rūmi and Donne were prominent literary figures whose influence extended long past their lifetimes. Yet, in spite of their worldwide prominence, neither considered poetry

as his priority. Rūmi even goes so far as to voice explicitly his contempt for the art of poetry by identifying it with "dark black clouds in the sky," while he talks about "the poet's lofty other device" as "the full moon."

Interestingly enough, for Donne, too—and even at the time of his "unruly" youth—poetry is only a means of conveying his different moods as a lover of women and as a seeker of Truth. The following lines from "The Triple Foole" are illuminating in this respect:

> I am two fooles, I know,
> For loving, and for saying so
> In whining poetry;
> But where's that wiseman, that would not be I,
> If she would not deny?
> Then as th'earth's inward narrow crooked lanes
> Do purge sea waters fretful salt away,
> I thought, if I could draw my paines,
> Through Rimes vexation, I should them allay.
> Griefe, brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,
> For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse. (1-10)

The above stanza clearly shows the secondary position and the lower value attached to poetry by Donne. The subordination of the art of composing poetry to the poet's priority becomes mostly clear, of course, in the latter half of his life and in the collection of his divine poems. In short, the secondary value attached to poetry by both Rūmi and Donne results from both poets' intellectual preoccupation with the intense desire to define the self and to find union with the Divine. In the works of both, moreover, poetry becomes a means to make

philosophical ideas palpable to those who either do not understand the language of philosophy or else have no taste for it.

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